

POETRY

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOLUME LVI

Poetry

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

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VOLUME LVI

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ERRATA :

Page 5, line 11. Read *Sails, foam-borne, bird-circled, this ship, and all her crew*

Page 57, line 26. For 1907 read 1914.

Page 246, 4th line of second poem. For *daze* read *days*

Page 292, 9th line from bottom. For *Edward* read *Edwin*.

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To have great poets
there must be great audiences too.

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To these guarantors and all others who are supporting the magazine and helping to finance its prizes, the editors would express their cordial thanks and the gratitude of the poets.

We record with sorrow the death on April 22nd of POETRY's friend and guarantor, Mrs. Joy Morton, of Lisle, Illinois.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME LVI

VERSE

| | Page |
|--|------|
| <i>Abel, Lionel</i> | |
| THREE POEMS | |
| The Midwives of History | 76 |
| Sign | 77 |
| Death at Lenin's Tomb | 78 |
| <i>Bergman, Alexander F</i> | |
| April 29th | 305 |
| <i>Blake, Howard</i> | |
| Transcorporeal Wanted | 11 |
| <i>Brand, Millen</i> | |
| Children in San Diego | 308 |
| <i>Brennan, John Malcolm</i> | |
| Address to the Refugees I-IV | 293 |
| <i>Campbell, Gladys</i> | |
| Voyage | 16 |
| <i>Carde, John</i> | |
| On a Photograph of a German Soldier Dead in Poland | 182 |
| <i>Claudell, Paul</i> (translated by <i>Eugene Jolas</i>) | |
| TWO POEMS | |
| The Blessed Lady Who Listens | 240 |
| Souvenir | 241 |
| <i>Cummings, E E</i> | |
| Five Poems | 233 |
| <i>Currey, R. N.</i> | |
| Now That The War Is Here | 306 |
| <i>Daly, James</i> | |
| TWO POEMS | |
| A D 1940: An Epigraph | 138 |
| Franchester Farm | 139 |
| <i>de la Mare, Walter</i> | |
| FOUR POEMS | |
| Things, Antiques; Lethe | 242 |
| Secret | 243 |
| <i>Deutsch, Babette</i> | |
| To Napoleon, In An Evil Time | 70 |
| <i>Eberhart, Richard</i> | |
| From "Poem In Construction" | 140 |
| <i>Empson, William</i> | |
| Bacchus III | 18 |

| | Page |
|--|------|
| <i>Fearing, Kenneth</i> | |
| Discussion After the Fifth or Sixth | 82 |
| Pay-off | 84 |
| 5 A.M. | 85 |
| <i>Ford, Charles Henry</i> | |
| The Overturned Lake | 19 |
| <i>Francis, Robert</i> | |
| Evening Ride | 253 |
| <i>Garrison, Troy</i> | |
| WHEN I WAS VERY OLD | |
| Sunlight and Its Shadow; Christmas | 244 |
| Early Night | 245 |
| Birth of My Anger | 246 |
| <i>Gee, Kenneth</i> | |
| Two Poems I-II | 194 |
| <i>Goodman, Paul</i> | |
| TWO POEMS | |
| “To Undo the Work of the Creation—”; Electra | 184 |
| <i>Grabo, Carl H.</i> | |
| FOUR POEMS. | |
| Sonnet; Mountain Shower | 254 |
| Spain | 255 |
| Folk Rhyme | 256 |
| <i>Hall, Amanda Benjamin</i> | |
| New England Sabbath | 197 |
| <i>Hayes, Alfred</i> | |
| The Imitation of Faust | 198 |
| <i>Hearst, James</i> | |
| SPEAKING OF IOWA: | |
| Morning Song; The Sun At Noon | 260 |
| False Warning | 261 |
| After the Son Died | 262 |
| The Same In This As Other Lands | 263 |
| <i>Heseltine, Nigel</i> | |
| Death and the Maiden | 248 |
| <i>Horn, Edward</i> | |
| POEMS FOR SMALL APARTMENTS | |
| The Brilliant; Recall | 193 |
| <i>Hughes, Langston</i> | |
| TWO POEMS: | |
| Out of Work | 20 |
| Love Again Blues | 21 |
| <i>Idle, E Doreen</i> | |
| Holiday | 131 |
| <i>Jacobsen, Josephine</i> | |
| TWO POEMS: | |
| The Bathers | 24 |
| Artist's Sustenance | 25 |
| For Wilfrid Owen | 315 |

| | Page |
|---|------|
| <i>Jolas, Eugene</i> | |
| Lumour 1-3 | 23 |
| see <i>Claudel, Paul</i> | |
| <i>Justema, William</i> | |
| TWO POEMS: | |
| To Last Violets; I Have a Friend | 14 |
| <i>Kees, Weldon</i> | |
| THREE POEMS: | |
| White Collar Ballad | 72 |
| Poem; Praise to the Mind | 73 |
| <i>Kramer, Arthur</i> | |
| TWO POEMS | |
| Victory | 124 |
| Yampire | 126 |
| <i>La Farge, Christopher</i> | |
| Portraits I-III | 250 |
| <i>Lechliiner, Ruth</i> | |
| A Winter's Tale | 298 |
| <i>Lee, Lawrence</i> | |
| THREE POEMS | |
| In Time of War | 312 |
| While We Are Safe | 312 |
| The Syllable Will Be Heard | 313 |
| <i>Ms Tyng Kwei</i> | |
| Fugitive Journey | 12 |
| <i>Lowe, Robert Liddell</i> | |
| THREE POEMS: | |
| Sir Isaac Newton; An Old Man Talking in His Sleep | 136 |
| The Liable Tree | 137 |
| <i>Maas, Willard</i> | |
| TWO POEMS: | |
| The Secret on the Urn | 8 |
| Tableau at Cocktail Hour | 9 |
| <i>MacDonagh, Donagh</i> | |
| Water and Time Divide the World Too Much | 81 |
| <i>MacIntyre, C F</i> | |
| From "Electra Hid An Axe" | 257 |
| <i>MacNeice, Louis</i> | |
| TEN POEMS | |
| Prognosis | 59 |
| Obituary | 61 |
| O'Connell Bridge | 62 |
| Entirely | 63 |
| Order to View | 64 |
| I Am That I Am | 65 |
| Three Thousand Miles; The British Museum Reading Room | 66 |
| Perdita | 67 |
| Stylite | 68 |

| | Page |
|---|------|
| <i>Mallisen, H B</i> | |
| POEMS IN TIME OF WAR | |
| One | 27 |
| Two | 28 |
| Three | 29 |
| <i>Manisfeld, Margery</i> | |
| Blessing Mrs. Larkin | 189 |
| <i>Markus, Yvonne</i> | |
| Anabasis I-III | 135 |
| <i>McGahay, Jeanne</i> | |
| Recurrent Dream | 13 |
| <i>Mallspangh, C A</i> | |
| The Tower of Desire | 247 |
| <i>Moore, Nicholas</i> | |
| Two Poems I-II | 130 |
| <i>Muur, Edwin</i> | |
| Then | 311 |
| <i>Nims, John Frederick</i> | |
| Parting 1940 | 307 |
| <i>Olson, Elder</i> | |
| DEVIL IN CRYSTAL | |
| Episode | 1 |
| Abailard Sleeps at His Book | 3 |
| Liber De Causis | 4 |
| Encounter of Travelers | 5 |
| The History | 6 |
| Sonnet | 7 |
| <i>Puls, Helene S</i> | |
| Peeling Apples | 134 |
| <i>Rago, Henry</i> | |
| THREE POEMS | |
| Meeting of a Poetry Society, The Newsreel | 186 |
| National Hook-Up | 188 |
| <i>Rodis, Edouard</i> | |
| FOUR POEMS | |
| The Political Prisoner | 121 |
| John Lack-Land, London by Moonlight | 122 |
| Amare Est Amarum | 123 |
| <i>Roethke, Theodore</i> | |
| Orders for the Day | 75 |
| <i>Roskolenko, Harry</i> | |
| To Rimbaud | 74 |
| <i>Rukeysor, Muriel</i> | |
| The Soul and Body of John Brown | 115 |
| <i>Salinger, Herman</i> | |
| Mississippi | 246 |

| | Page |
|--|------|
| <i>Schacht, Marshall</i> | |
| "As Through a Glass Darkly" | 314 |
| <i>Stearns, Florence Dickinson</i> | |
| Answer in Green | 26 |
| <i>Stevens, Thomas Wood</i> | |
| The Cactus | 173 |
| <i>Strobel, Marion</i> | |
| The Target Is the Same | 300 |
| <i>Sweeney, James Johnson</i> | |
| Guernica | 128 |
| <i>Symons, Julian</i> | |
| THREE WAR POEMS. | |
| End of a Year | 301 |
| Pdb | 302 |
| Poem • | 303 |
| <i>Taggard, Genevieve</i> | |
| Coming and Going of Storms | 243 |
| <i>Untermeyer, Jean Starr</i> | |
| The Realists | 127 |
| <i>Vsereck, Peter</i> | |
| Graves Are Made to Waltz On | 185 |
| <i>Williams, William Carlos</i> | |
| Raleigh Was Right | 69 |
| <i>Wolff, David•</i> | |
| While We Slept | 316 |
| <i>Wyatt, Edith Franklin</i> | |
| TWO POEMS | |
| Stream of Consciousness — 1816 | 190 |
| Perugino's World | 192 |
| <i>Young, Marguerite</i> | |
| Ventriloquist. The Coffee Hour | 132 |

P R O S E

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|----|
| Edwin Markham | <i>Charles Hanson Towne</i> | 30 |
| A Poet and the Class Struggle: Two Stages | <i>Amos N. Wilder</i> | 32 |
| <i>Before the Brave and First Will and Testament</i> , by Kenneth Patchen | | |
| REVIEWS• | | |
| Into the World | <i>David Daiches</i> | 40 |
| <i>Another Time Poems</i> , by W. H. Auden | | |
| For a Wider Audience | <i>John Malcolm Brinnin</i> | 43 |
| <i>America Was Promises</i> , by Archibald MacLeish | | |
| Lloyd Frankenberg's Poems | <i>Nelson Algren</i> | 46 |
| <i>The Red Kite</i> , by Lloyd Frankenberg | | |

| | | |
|--|------------------------|-----|
| Lyric and Narrative | Arthur Meeker, Jr. | 48 |
| <i>Strange Dimension</i> , by Florence Dickinson Stearns | | |
| <i>Scarlet Anne</i> , by Theda Kenyon | | |
| Campion, Musical Poet | Thomas Howells | 51 |
| <i>England's Musical Poet, Thomas Campion</i> , by Miles Merwin Kastendieck | | |
| Louis MacNeice: The Artist As Everyman | Julian Symons | 86 |
| REVIEWS | | |
| The Rimbaud Mystery Clarified | Philip Blair Rice | 95 |
| <i>Arthur Rimbaud</i> , by Enid Starkie | | |
| <i>Some Poems of Rimbaud</i> , translated by Lionel Abel | | |
| <i>A Season in Hell</i> , by Arthur Rimbaud. Translated with an Introduction by Delmore Schwartz | | |
| A Dramatic Gift | Alfred Kreymborg | 101 |
| <i>The White Stranger</i> , by Kimball Flaccus | | |
| Or It Can Be | Elsa Gidlow | 104 |
| <i>This Is Our Own</i> , by Marie de L. Weich | | |
| Direct Poems | Winfield Townley Scott | 106 |
| <i>Poems</i> , by Alvin Foote | | |
| Correspondence | William Everson | 108 |
| The Poetry of A. E. Housman | John Peale Bishop | 144 |
| <i>The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman</i> | | |
| When Children Write Verse | Maude Sumner Smith | 154 |
| REVIEWS | | |
| A Rocking Alphabet | Conrad Asken | 159 |
| <i>The World I Breathe</i> , by Dylan Thomas | | |
| The Last Tourist | S. I. Hayakawa | 161 |
| <i>Cafes and Cathedrals</i> , by C. F. MacIntyre | | |
| The Military Image | David Sachs | 164 |
| <i>Sequence on Violence</i> , by Harry Roskolenko | | |
| Seventeenth Century Yankee | Howard Blake | 165 |
| <i>The Poetical Works of Edward Taylor</i> | | |
| The Medievalism of T. S. Eliot | Leo Shapiro | 202 |
| REVIEWS | | |
| Clever, Disconcerting, Rash | Lionel Abel | 214 |
| <i>The Man Coming Towards You</i> , by Oscar Williams | | |
| A Singing Gallery | Gladys Campbell | 217 |
| <i>Slow Wall</i> , by Leonora Speyer | | |
| Four Poets | M. Jean Prussing | 220 |
| <i>This, My Letter</i> , by Sara Henderson Hay | | |
| <i>Man in the Shadows</i> , by Elias Lieberman | | |
| <i>San Joaquin</i> , by William Everson | | |
| <i>Broken Crescendo</i> , by Anne Hamilton | | |
| Aspects of Craft | William M. Sale, Jr. | 222 |
| <i>The Poet's Work</i> , by John Holmes | | |
| <i>Lyrics in Brief</i> , edited by Tom Boggs | | |
| Anthologies as Balance-Sheets | Edouard Roditi | 225 |
| <i>Anthologie des Poètes de la N.R.F.</i> | | |
| French Poetry and the Revival of Mysticism | Eugene Jolas | 264 |
| REVIEWS: | | |
| The Poet's Task | Babette Deutsch | 271 |
| <i>Warime Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, 1914-1921</i> , translated by M. D. Herter Norton | | |

| | Page |
|---|------------------------------|
| A Mixed Bag | Richard Eberhart 274 |
| <i>Poems</i> , by Glyn Jones | |
| <i>Poems</i> , by Roy Fuller | |
| 38 <i>Poems</i> , by Henry Treece | |
| Venus and Politics | Harry Roskolenko 278 |
| <i>Mirrors of Venus A Novel in Sonnets</i> , and <i>Political Self-Portrait</i> , by John Wheelwright | |
| Proving the Rule | Margaret Walker 281 |
| <i>Each to the Other A Novel in Verse</i> , by Christopher La Farge | |
| In Memoriam | Elizabeth Conner Lindsay 282 |
| <i>Echoes</i> , by Helen Burwell Chapin | |
| Swedish Festival | Ruth Dart Stephan 284 |
| <i>Arcadia Borealis Selected Poems of Erik Axel Karlfeldt</i> , translated by Charles Wharton Stork | |
| Forward from Positivism | David Hawxhurst Wilson 285 |
| <i>Language and Reality The Philosophy of Language and the Principles of Symbolism</i> , by Wilbur Marshall Urban | |
| U. S. Writers in War | Kenneth Fearing 318 |
| Poetry in the First World War | David Dasches 323 |
| On the Continent | F. C. Wenskopf 332 |
| REVIEWS: | |
| <i>The Spirit Watches</i> | Roberta Teale Swartz 334 |
| <i>The Spirit Watches</i> , by Ruth Pitter | |
| A New Adventure | Frajam Taylor 337 |
| <i>Homeward to America</i> , by John Ciardi | |
| "Where To, Where Now?" | Thomas Howells 340 |
| <i>First Manifesto</i> , by Thomas McGrath | |
| <i>Personal Sun</i> , by Hubert Creekmore | |
| <i>ABC's</i> , by Charles Henri Ford | |
| Lorca in English | John Gould Fletcher 343 |
| <i>Poems of F. Garcia Lorca</i> , with English Translation by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili | |
| <i>The Poet in New York and Other Poems</i> , by Federico Garcia Lorca. The Spanish Text with an English Translation by Rolfe Humphries | |
| <i>Blood Wedding</i> , by Federico Garcia Lorca. Translation by Gilbert Newman | |
| News Notes | 54, 109, 169, 228, 288, 347 |
| Notes on Contributors | 56, 112, 171, 230, 291, 349 |
| Books Received | 58, 114, 172, 232, 292, 350 |

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| | | |
|--|----------------------------|----|
| Devil in Crystal | ELDER OLSON | 1 |
| Episode—Abailard Sleeps at His Book—Liber de Causis— | | |
| Encounter of Travelers—The History—Sonnet | | |
| Two Poems | WILLARD MAAS | 8 |
| The Secret on the Urn—Tableau at Cocktail Hour | | |
| Transcorporeal Wanted | HOWARD BLAKE | 11 |
| Fugitive Journey | LII TYNG KWEI | 12 |
| Recurrent Dream | JEANNE MCGAHEY | 13 |
| Two Poems | WILLIAM JUSTEMA | 14 |
| To Last Violets—I have a Friend | | |
| Voyage | GLADYS CAMPBELL | 16 |
| Bacchus III | WILLIAM EMPSON | 18 |
| The Overturned Lake | CHARLES HENRI FORD | 19 |
| Two Poems | LANGSTON HUGHES | 20 |
| Out of Work—Love Again Blues | | |
| Lumor | EUGENE JOLAS | 22 |
| Two Poems | JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN | 24 |
| The Bathers—Artist's Sustenance | | |
| Answer in Green | FLORENCE DICKINSON STEARNS | 26 |
| Poems in Time of War, I-III | H. B. MALLALIEU | 27 |
| Edwin Markham, 1852-1940 | CHARLES HANSON TOWNE | 30 |
| A Poet and the Class Struggle | AMOS N. WILDER | 32 |
| Reviews: | | |
| Into the World | DAVID DAICHES | 40 |
| For a Wider Audience | JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN | 43 |
| Lloyd Frankenberg's Poems | NELSON ALGREN | 46 |
| Lyric and Narrative | ARTHUR MEEKER, JR. | 48 |
| Campion, Musical Poet | THOMAS HOWELLS | 51 |
| News Notes | | 54 |
| Notes on Contributors | | 56 |
| Books Received | | 58 |

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P O E T R Y

A M A G A Z I N E O F V E R S E

VOL. LVI

NO. I

APRIL 1940

DEVIL IN CRYSTAL

EPISODE

SET here a waste scene; sea, sky like funeral sables;
By black sea a harsh hill; a tower set thereon
With one light burning; now let there be storm,
Thunder, shaken lightning, lurid rain,
And seven demons sailing on green cloud,
And let the Time, in black hat and black cloak,
Creep like a murderer upon the Place.
Summon the pale spectators—The Play begins.

'Look!' says the Doctor, in the tower room.
'I have set all in order—flame sings, clear glass glows,
Crucible bubbles, brightens; now you shall see.'
The dog with cat's head grafted slinks from the chamber.

Around, in wire cages feathered mice
Turn flame-lit eyes; clock ticks like bomb,
Marking the Time.

*'I behold, Master, a sphere
Turning in cloud and storm; thereon are laid
Waters, and lands; the lands quake, the seas rage.
I behold a wilderness, a black hill, a black tower:
Within are two men and a candle-flame.'*

The Doctor laughs; strokes sharp beard. 'Now I mix,
Now I decant; now add this blazing element,
Green seawater, blue aether; now examine.'

Without the room howls catlike, now, the dog.
Lightning at window jigs like a bright forked man.

'A globe! White-hot; suspended; spinning in vapor!
Spinning in cloud; suspended; nothing upholds it!
I see lands and waters—I see towns and people upon it!

'Precisely—precisely. But with this perfection: •
The whole is evil; the pure absolute ill
Like a fatal jewel; like the devil in crystal.
O excellent formula!'

*'Master, the thing is known,
The riddle unriddled; let the Trumpeter be summoned.'*

Let fall the curtain; so; the scene's at end.

ABAILARD SLEEPS AT HIS BOOK

What time the body drowsed in chair,
 Mouse fed in platter, and flame wagged;
 Cup glimmered in cupboard; the cold stair
 Creaked; the house stiffened; the wind flagged.

As lax flesh, mindless, and unstrung
 To purpose, slept, like any beast,
 Moon stood at window and stared long;
 Spectral the lit branch; snow fell, ceased.

Spire and hutch with lucent snow
 Sparkled minutely; all shone, shone,
 As if the earth had been the moon,
 Till all waned with the waning glow.

Then in the waste night flame on wick
 Perished; the lean worm unseen
 Consumed the subtlety of the Greek;
 Rime thickened on hinge and pane.

Lastly, amid dark snows a bird
 Chirped; the house grew colder still;
 And the mute animal sighed, stirred,
 Restive to the returning will.

LIBER DE CAUSIS

The Babylonian said,
In shape of thunder and storm
Marduk slew Tiamat,
And of that trunk enorm
Star, sea, and beast were made;
Lastly, a certain clay.
There seems small doubt of that.

No, No, another cried,
The Earth is but a ball
The Dung-beetle rolls round
To hatch out his own will.
If smaller creatures still
Elect to walk that sphere,
That is their own affair.

But up the west came the wild day,
Twelve stars and a red cindrous sun,
And fast in that prodigious dawn
The scroll of reason burnt away;
And air grew dark and wild,
And something monstrous walked
Like earthquake, and towns rocked,

And sky cracked burning at both ends,
And there an idiot Giant rose
And with huge hairy hands
Seized the Thunder-Tree

And shook down worlds like fruits
And plucked up the Universe by the roots;
Nor deigned to notice me.

ENCOUNTER OF TRAVELERS

Helmsman, staring wild,
What is this galliass
Leans with huge sail and high gilden stern,
Wing-ringed, glimmering in sea-glass?

Pilgrim, in luminous storm
Or halcyon sky
Sails, foam-borne, bird-circled, this ship, and all her crew
I, I:

And this ship I steer
Bears, writ on her wreathed counter, *Dream*,
Yet were her far port known,
Hath even stranger name.

THE HISTORY

I nailed on rock upon the eagle-wall
(Twelve million years amid the crashing cloud;
The bird beats, fastened with beak and claw upon me)

Behold the glass world; therein seven images
Formed of clear light move with seeming motion,
And seven of darkness wholly; all are mine.

Seven and seven illusions of contrary color,
Moving in crystal, of one nailed motionless;
And the motion of these, the world's whole myth and history.

Thou that madest the Single and the Many
Thou hast made the One soul manifold with infinite mirrors;
It was myself besieged myself at Troy;

Myself that slew myself in the beaked galleys;
Perseus and Andromeda and the Beast were I;
The betrayer and betrayed were always one,

Though the tale speak of many lands and kings.

SONNET

I have served Thee; give me mine hire, O Lord.
Thy seed I planted; Thine the grain to be:
Behold the hollow husk, the blackened gourd;
Fools, affluent, mock; Thy Self goes mocked in me.

Why gavest Thou me this bitter grace, to sow,
No fruits intended? No especial thing,
As grain cloud-grown; recalled frost; virtuous snow;
Or winter warmed, I ask; but spring in spring,

Winter in wintry season.—Invisible
Turner of seasons! Artificer of storms! Thou! Hear, O, behold:
Pied fields lift flourishing; lambs leap; orchards, alight, shine
Aloft with leaved fruit, in the lands not thine;
Thy boughs stand birdless on the summer hill;
Thy lambs lie stiffening in the summer fold.

Elder Olson

T W O P O E M S

THE SECRET ON THE URN

Spreading like beneficent wings, the cool evening
Released on the summer streets, the naked children
Calling from the alleyways, and you, seeing the face
Of destruction like a mask stretch over the wrenched mouths,

Hear prophecies of the heroes' death, the gods' end:
All things of greenness and the loveliness of air,
Bird-flight and tree-sound, and the purity of lightning,
And the fierce secrecies exchanged with the passerby,

The vows that give beyond the eyes' enforced denial,
The kiss, the arms' wonder, lending to the miraculous star
And speeding cloud, sky-brightness, the heart's last gift—
And the stranger passes and will not pass again.

Hands that need no words, words needing no lips,
We speak in myths, the meaning of which is death,
Messages of fire that consume the citadels—
But you have not wanted destruction, asking only peace.

Comes over all the violence of our time, the flashing
Of the guns and the ready feet of the marchers:
Those who give in to the animal laugh and the swift action,
Letting blood, and the hallways strewn with bodies.

This the brutal landscape, the unimagined tree,
The nude charred branches burning the crossed symbol

And the new crucifixion in the shattered stone—
They know the denial of the dream and what end shall come.

See in all the stopped love with no eyes for warming
The stranger; no silent greeting that quivers to blood,
Tightening the throat with sweet fright and trembling.
See the monstrous dark and the treacherous pathways:

The rot in the veins, the illness infecting the heart,
And the promise of the white mountain is defiled,
The scent of the water and the wave betrayed, flowers
Fused with the odor of flesh—all beauty defeated.

But in us alone, beyond the midnight cold, the ghastly dawn
Lifting the lurid sun, awakening the eyes of the cowards
And the desireless bodies stationed at the streetcorners—
Alone, beyond destruction, the one impregnable fortress:

Our secrets: the tenderness of evening and the hand
Held, pulsing with the silence of the unspeakable need—
And you, most like a figure on an old remembered urn,
Stand there to meet the terror with love upon you.

TABLEAU AT COCKTAIL HOUR

Here at our sides the shadow-painted eyes,
The determined lips that shock the mouth with smiles,
Out of the window from the water the plane takes off,
Gaining the altitude for the flight home,
Leaving us in the room with the smoke and the poisonous laugh.

We have lost the adolescent New Year pledges,
Forgotten the package of cellophane flowers
That held the secret in expensive corsages,
While we await the scream of the tabloid page,
Rearranging furniture and reading hours.

There are trips to be taken at the travel bureau
But none that take us back to college days.
The Mediterranean is no desire in blue,
The haystack no retreat for moonlight parties,
Finding all false that once we found so true.

And from the hot plains the infantry returns
With heroes charging in afterdinner speeches.
Building a wall about decaying love
We guard our smallest deeds from the day's alarm,
Still seek the island of our childhood searches.

Is there hope in the dewy sun, in the star
Magnetic to the blood on the summer night?
In the eyelids touched, in war
And dying for something, in the fabulous light
Of the dark that reveals the inward scars?

Here are the timetables and the weather charts
And we stand rooted to the living room,
Lifting the ice-prongs to the whiskey glasses,
While perpetually the doors close on the heart
And all the burning world the heart named home.

Willard Maas

TRANSCORPOREAL WANTED

There is little, somehow, one can say
Abrupter than the green thing, the now thrust,
The brute push of starved fingers to reach God
Within the framed avoidance of your corpse.

These words may tell you nothing, but must say
That in one gravel night within a room
Blood braced to speak.

These words are stars that are
In quiet and in token of a sense,
Token of that flame which can distil
All void, all torment, and redeem
Imaginings of what a still star spells.

But words have bruised the tongue, the tools of thought
Rasp on the rusty tongue, corrode the cool
Of said, and tell no silence till the night
Shivers with flares of what this silence speaks.
Here let the word give birth and boom a brain
Across, within, confronting that recess
Where veins compute the sum of what should be.
Let pulse waves crush egregious shells that cut
The me from you, each hair thing from the rest,
For shells deform our meet magnificence.

Howard Blake

FUGITIVE JOURNEY¹

For those days waiting no longer
out of my old neighbor's
floating the childish odor
of the dates to be red and ripe
while clusters of grape
dyed charmingly with frost purple
and golden palace roofs glittering a fall eve,
I chose one fair morning of May
and hid myself within windows of a train.
Along the parallel hope wheels rolled.
I was all in tears looking forward.
My eyes cut the waves of wheat, blindly.
On fathers' corpses, O the cold hair silvery.
When the iron mollusc reached its end
at a seashore sorrily but happily I stood.
Wind mourned cruelly coming from afar,
it presented me the stranger garment.
But I was promised to get a cabin.
Then struggled myself down and up
skating beautiful curvilinear traces
referring to dot chords on a map in textbook.
Balanced monotonous days, a dialogue
between two free-minded gulls and me.
Morning shine washed their milky wings.
Two or three points of little boats

¹Last year I safely made my escape from Peiping where Japanese paws had then occupied for three hundred days.

twinkled afar like stars at dawn.
Violent water could never put out their light.
I was comfortable deeply in my heart.
One day the steam cell touched the favorite soil,
The southern corner of this bloody old country;
and spontaneous energy carried me out with joy
up peaks adorned with necklaces of clouds
Under the leaves of green palm powerful
I kissed the Nation's toes.

Lii Tynng Kwei

RECURRENT DREAM

We were by water
Clear with light, the sun making the pebbles round.
I felt your mouth the many wings flying
all my blood
Beginning the storm of bees.

• The touch of everything
That time was like the edge of flowers: or I held
Between my hands as between book pages
The believed bird. (Oh wing and the small bones
Hollow-light, and the wildness.)

And the dream stopped:
But I remember, but I carry always
In my palm the fear
The moving of feathers the quick eyes.

Jeanne McGahay

T W O P O E M S

TO LAST VIOLETS

If this is and it is the end,
take violence with you. Spend
it and Spring far from hence
or answer for the consequence.

If I could but I cannot pretend
indifference. Neither should you lend
me only what is intense
about you. Knowing I have no defense.

I wonder do you never mend
your instruments? Then wend
your way to where Spring is and thence
send me some innocence.

I HAVE A FRIEND

with whom I am confused so like are we in varying.
I say a friend and yet we never seek each other out
and seldom speak, but, meeting often on the same ground
—which is familiar no matter where we are—
we lower our heads as before a mirror we rather had not see
despite or because we are so similar.

WILLIAM JUSTEMA

There is no question of who is superior. Instinctively
with or against our will, we both seem to don
the appearance of what we're on, and backgrounds fair
are rare. I feel for him, poor fellow. Today
I saw him looking yellow as a leaf and I daresay
I looked the same. Tonight each of us may wear
valor, scorn, or an enthusiasm not our own
and we'll look well enough, except in the other's eyes.
Alas! by what vengeful saving grace can we belong
in any place save ours alone where—it must be so—
the disguise too perfect is to recognize.

And is there no terrain known that we might be upon
clearly distinguishing its animals from stone
and me from you, Chameleon?

William Justema

VOYAGE

The woods are quiet waiting for the rain.
The water of the stream is like purled air
Flowing on white sand. Not a grain
Is stirred. Even the slim trout darting there
Move without effort, as through limpid glass.

*There is a desolate place along that stream
Where any boat that bears these two must pass:
And I have known that region in a dream.*

Sweeping the stream with plumes of bridal white
The titi bloom crowds back the swampy, wild
Growth of oak and pine where even a bright
Sun reaches the earth as moonlight, silver and mild.

A road has broken through the woods and river.
There in the open they launch their boat. They give
It to that flowering road of water. Never
Can they now escape its way and live,
Unless they turn and push against the flow
Till they can tread the firm highway again,
Or surrender to the bending stream and go
Out to the broad bay and the sandy plain.

Now I can see the place these two must pass.
The forest will recede till they see far:
And they will wonder whether or not they are

Enchanted, for so clear the air, they see
The stream like air, and flowing silently.

A tropic sunlight drowns in the blood,
Though here the sun seems never to have shone.
A clear grey twilight takes them in a flood;
The bare oaks seem like shapes of twilight grown
From a dark land. On skeleton, stripped trees,
I see the dusty buzzards; waiting, still;
They seem like dead fruit grown upon disease,
So ominous they are, loose-necked with tearing bill
There is a stump of oak their boat must pass
Or stop beside. And this they will remember:
How, coiled upon the broken tree like brass
In its firm molded rings of brown and amber,
Loop rests on loop to build a sinuous mound
Up to a coppery head. And every turn
Seems fixed forever in a measured round.
Yet soft as footfall of a deerskin shoe,
Without a sound or hesitating quiver,
Slowly the weighted coils resolve into
A line that quietly lowers to the river.
Four buzzards beat their dusty wings and lift.
Then one by one the others rise till all
The sky is dark with them as with a swift
Cloud; and suddenly the rain begins to fall.

Around the bend, the titi blooms, a shield
That hides the forest and adorns the way—

And now with cold, clenched hands these two will wield
The oars that pull them quickly to the bay,
And when the wide white water is before them
Will hesitate with swift inquiring eyes,
Will wonder what strange stream it was that bore them,
What strange familiar shore before them lies.

Gladys Campbell

BACCHUS III

The god who fled down with a standard yard
(Surveying with that reed which was his guard
He showed St. John the New Jerusalem;
It was a sugarcane containing rum
And hence the fire on which these works depend)
Taught and quivered strung upon the bend
An outmost crystal a recumbent flame
(He drinks all cups the tyrant could acclaim;
He still is dumb, illimitably wined,
Burns still his nose and liver for mankind) . . .
It is an ether, such an agony.
In the thin choking air of Caucasus
He under operation lies forever
Smelling the chlorine in the chloroform.
The plains around him flood with the destroyers
Pasturing the stallions in the standing corn.

William Empson

THE OVERTURNED LAKE

Blue unsolid tongue, if you could talk,
the mountain would supply the brain;
but mountains are mummies: the autobus and train,
manmade worms, disturb their centuries.
Tongue of a deafmute, the lake
shudders, inarticulate.

You are like the mind of a man, too:
surface reflecting the blue day,
the life about you seemingly organized, revolving about you,
you as a center,
but I am concerned in your overthrow:
I should like to pick you up, as if you were a woman of water,
hold you against the light and see your veins flow
with fishes; reveal the animal-flowers that rise
nightlike beneath your eyes.

Noiseless as memory, ready as fear,
lake, I shall make you into a poem,
for I would have you unpredictable as the human body:
I shall equip you with the strength of a dream,
rout you from your blue subconscious bed,
overturn your unconcern,
as the mind is overturned by memory, the heart by dread.

Charles Henri Ford

TWO POEMS

OUT OF WORK

I walked de streets till
De shoes wore off my feet.
I done walked de streets till
De shoes wore off my feet.
I was lookin' for a job
So's that I could eat.

I couldn't find no job
So I went to de WPA.
Couldn't find no job
So I went to de WPA.
WPA man told me:
You got to live here a year and a day.

A year and a day, Lawd,
In this great big lonesome town!
Year and a day
In this great big lonesome town!
I might starve for a year but
That extra day would get me down.

Did you ever try livin'
On two-bits minus two?
I say did you ever try livin'
On two-bits minus two?
Why don't you try it, folks,
And see what it would do to you?

LANGSTON HUGHES

LOVE AGAIN BLUES

My life ain't nothin'
But a lot o' Gawd-knows-what.
I say my life ain't nothin'
But a lot o' Gawd-knows-what.
Just one thing after 'nother
Added to de trouble that I got.

When I got you I
Thought I had an angel-chile.
When I got you I
Thought I had an angel-chile.
You turned out to be a devil
That mighty nigh drove me wild!

Tell me, tell me
What makes love such an ache and pain?
Tell me, tell me
What makes love such an ache and pain?
It takes you and it breaks you—
But you got to love again.

Langston Hughes

LUMOR

1.

The angel Lumor walks with us
Beautifully glisters his face
He is slender and white
He is a titan

He says
I watched over your childhood dreaming
I remember the shiver-hours of blizzard-seasons
I remember your trembling midnights
Softly I bedded you in blankets

We listen to his ripple-words
His music-grammar chants

He walks with us through the canyons
Past the neon-lights in the cliff-city
He glides through the babel-crowd
And scatters cherubic metaphors

2.

Lumor came to us
When our hearts were lacerated by grief
When death walked over the threshold

A beloved one lay on his bier
He had suffered much

His calvary was over

The light went out in our world

Fear stalked through our lives

The house itself collapsed

And Lumor came with words of pity

And a healing smile lay over the earth

3.

Lumor sings celestial folk-songs

To deafen the rumble of the guns

To deafen the tearmoans of the women

Who wander into an abyss of solitude

Who are niobes over ruined beams

Who lament the elegies of the gable-village

The flame-titan strews white poems

Over the darkle-hearts of lonely men

Over the falter-eyes of homeless ones

He chants his hymns of sidereal ascents

Which celebrate the kermesse of becoming

Which foretell the grail of the future love

Forgotten in the frontier-mutilated mind

Lumor gathers the litany of vocables

In an ave of vertical spiring

Eugene Jolas

T W O P O E M S

THE BATHERS

The leaves flashed darkly though there was not much wind,
It went and came; the water broke brightly over the rocks
And the wind and the light and the water made him feel half-
blind

So that perhaps something of what he saw he mistook

He must have been mistaken, of course: the sun on brown flesh,
Blond hair, dark hair, the water breaking, its chatter and roar,
The heat of his diamond-dusted rock, the ripple and flash,
Were not unnatural. But what happened was odd and clear.

The whole weight dropped suddenly away—the mind, the
knowledge,

Love, heavy love, was gone completely, and identity.

There was left the mountain-water, the bathers, the foliage;

The trees gripped down, swept up, and over stood the sky . .

It only lasted a minute, of course—more was not to be hoped:
Whatever had been disrupted shot back in its groove.

But there was the moment, or minute, or pause. He had slipped
Free of knowlege; he had been rid of pity, cleansed of love.

JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN

ARTIST'S SUSTENANCE

The artist's hope, through the clear glass,
Seeks out the lovely first of day,
The cold gold orchard; cries, Alas,
This is the dust, the inside way.

Alas, he cries, I shrink, I crumble,
The sustenance is there, without . . .
Into the biting dew, hot, humble,
He takes his appetite and doubt.

But in the blue bright air he falters,
For having grasped his wine, his meat,
He must acknowledge how each alters,
Chameleon-like, intent to cheat.

Quick, quick, with his deceitful pelf
He scurries back on frantic legs,
To feast and labor—finds himself
Again betrayed by husk and dregs

Josephine Jacobsen

ANSWER IN GREEN

I spoke to the grass that brushed against my knees:
Are you the answer or Empedocles
Who gave to life a scientific core,
And thus proclaimed himself conspirator
With what a man can dedicate to reason?

Does science solve the problem of the season,
That gives a blossom to the bough or ice to the eaves,
Or brings a livelier color to the changing leaves?

We rustle pages of our Aristotle,
And keep the Hylozoists in a bottle.
Unlike the ancient Genii lost to view,
They claimed a philosophic residue
Persisting through a labyrinth of years.

A robin does not argue. It appears.
It lives its day and lets discussion pass.
"Perhaps you've solved the problem," said the grass.

Florence Dickinson Stearns

POEMS IN TIME OF WAR

ONE

Where now shall a man look to find the truth?
Turning his torch of words behind the bone
To phrase with light the dream's dark area?
In images connecting light with light,
Or dancer's spiral through the wells of night?
In stars of love splashed over us like rain,
All the beautiful apocrypha of pain?

Where are the bones that skeleton tomorrow,
From which we sketch the Egypt of the future?
Gazing from the steeple of our sorrow
What pyramids are symbol of its features?

Coded in figures on financial pages,
Lost in the hieroglyph of history books,
Truth waits our impetus of images:
Unescorted by the civilizing lie, I see Truth
Streaming the single track to Egypt and from there
Diffused into my room, my time, and everywhere.

So shall I plough my barren fields of verse:
Plant flowers when the grain is planted first.

TWO

Who says my country names the earth, names stars.
The place I prize cannot be separate,
Or if it is, I'll choose this particle
Of dust or dew and say I'm native here.
Who says my king uncrowns himself and me.

True also that my images contract.
My country is people and a group of friends,
The whole of Romney Marsh or half of Kent.
It is an album shot with villages,
Or blurred enlargements of a smoky town.
My country lies buried beneath history texts,
Or is a flag advanced on many alien hills:
It is a banker driving blindly through the slums.

The gift of life dispensed with, nothing gained:
If still the evil myth goes on.
The devil you stare at prods you in the back.

My country is the region of my good,
But evil there as much my enemy
As evil anywhere.

THREE

In different contexts different words.
Beware the pointed dazzle of the jewel
Whose brilliance hides a drab and trashy setting.
Words that are worn to fascinate
Can, like the diamond, concentrate our sight,
Hiding the hand or harder lips above.

Freedom for the few is fountains set
Within the spacious idleness of parks:
And freedom spoken in another county
Conjures a derelict and stricken town.
Freedom for all becomes an omnibus,
Each wishing for his own and private stop,
But for his penny forced to keep the route.

Falseness is most brazen behind words,
In the confusion of the crowd
He turns policeman or a thief at will.

So in these hours when words like magistrates
Decide our summary and legal acts,
Do not seek precedents in alphabetic law,
But in the mind pass sentence on the word.

H. B. Mallalieu

EDWIN MARKHAM

1852-1940

EDWIN MARKHAM is gone; and, as he wrote of Lincoln, he "leaves a lonesome place against the sky." His was the first authentic American voice in our time to be raised against the injustice that is in the world; and his most famous poem, *The Man With the Hoe*, swept through our land, and ultimately, in translation, reached the whole world. The power and pity of it have not diminished with the years. The lines first appeared in 1899 in a San Francisco newspaper, and were copied everywhere, discussed by everyone. A clarion call had been uttered; and almost overnight the poet found himself famous. He was in his late forties when he wrote the Hoe Man, as he often alluded to his poem, one day after he had looked at Millet's well-known painting of the poor drudge tilling the fields.

Markham came east, and soon settled on Staten Island, where he lived simply with his wife and son. How well I recall the many pilgrimages we young men and women made to that quiet house on Sunday afternoons, taking the Elevated road and then the ferry-boat and the rocking trolley that led to his door. The small cottage became a shrine. Zona Gale was among those who loved to go there; so was Ridgely Torrence; Jessie B. Rittenhouse, Theodosia Garrison — all the youthful poets just beginning to climb the hills of Parnassus. Coffee and sandwiches would be given us all, prepared by Mrs. Markham; and amid an admiring group the white-haired poet would sit and talk to us, recite his poems when we asked him to do so, benign, friendly, lovable. He had a gorgeous leonine head, and he had the eyes of genius — it was as though he peered into eternity with those flashing

eyes. I am sure he knew how handsome he was: he basked in the admiration meted out to him; but as he often said, "Do not be afraid of spoiling me, for praise only makes me humble."

One day, about ten years ago, there came a knock upon my door in the heart of New York; and when I opened it the distinguished poet stood smiling, with a little gift in his hand. It was a small paper edition of his prize poem, written in memory of Edgar Allan Poe, *Our Israfel*, beautifully inscribed. I treasure it as I treasure few of my books.

Some special guardian angel looked after Edwin Markham. Careless always in crossing streets, he wandered about our huge city with ease and confidence, and only once in the many years he thus strolled about did he meet with a slight accident.

It has always annoyed me when critics have praised the Hoe Man and disparaged so many of Markham's lyrical pieces. His ode on Lincoln is as fine a tribute as anything we have concerning that Man of the People. He could, wonderfully enough, write to order on a given theme; and he told me that on the evening when the Lincoln poem was to be read, he had composed only half of it by noontime. He finished it as if his whole being were on fire, and those final lines are the best of all.

He stood for nobility of character, for everything that is great in the American spirit.

Come, clear the way, then, clear the way;
Blind creeds and kings have had their day;
Break the dead branches from the path;
Our hope is in the aftermath—
Our hope is in heroic men
Star-led to build the world again.

Charles Hanson Towne

A POET AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE: TWO STAGES¹

THE WORK of Kenneth Patchen² is of great interest for the light it throws on the outlook of the "proletarian poet" or social radical today, and also for the parallels that appear in it with intense religious motivation. Large parts of it are of marked difficulty. This is only partly due to the special character of his concerns and his imagery. One would hazard the guess that he has put himself to school to Hart Crane, as any poet well may, and he shows some of the powers as well as some of the defects of that method. At his best, and his best is often struck out of a context of obscurity, we find a forcibleness of statement and an eloquence in its kind that indicate a gifted poet. And we may add to this the fact that Patchen, in the frame of reference of his social themes, touches deep levels of general human concern. We are not surprised to find that in *First Will & Testament*, just recently published, he has sought more general themes, without however abandoning his former sympathies.

Turning first to *Before the Brave*, there can be no mistaking the ardor and austerity of his challenge to whoever will hear, be they proletarians or not. Nor can one mistake the true doctrine of communism, which appears in his work not as doctrine but as singing and passion. For those who know the language and those that will penetrate the difficulties, here are the themes

¹Part of this essay will be included in a book of criticism by Mr. Wilder, *Spiritual Aspects of the New Poetry*, to be published in May by Harpers.

²*Before the Brave*. Random House, 1936
First Will and Testament. New Directions, 1939.

that have moved mountains in Russia and that work as a well-nigh irresistible ferment in many parts of the world today. This is the faith and the uncompromising boldness of a church, but of a church that is a church indeed. Let the guardians of religious institutions and democracy with their relaxed powers and slackened bows give good heed. Do they believe in the future? Here in any case is certainty of inevitable and predestined victory. Do they recognize the mortal conflict of good and evil? Here is deliberate preparation for the imminent revolution. Do they have the elate abandonment of apostle and martyr? Do they touch hands in a sense of common mission with committed bands in many nations? Here is this kind of vocation and this kind of solidarity together with a sense of glory growing out of ignominy and triumph won out of despair.

Far-carrying movements in the world rise ultimately out of conditions where the hearts of men are ploughed and harrowed for long periods of time by humiliation and distress. The iron enters into the soul finally and they become capable of single-mindedness. They become capable of disregarding inconsequentials like comfort and safety. This condition among the poor is evidenced in these poems:

 their retching sour rage
Is splendid harvest

The ignominies, deprivation and injury reach a point where profound hungers and urges are felt, not necessarily destructive, but in any case insistent. Not necessarily destructive: it is first of all a crying out for something better, and only if that is denied comes the necessity to destroy the barriers to something better.

Let us have madness openly, O men

P O E T R Y : *A Magazine of Verse*

Of my generation Let us follow
The footsteps of this slaughtered age . . .

But note what follows:

We wanted more; we looked to find
An open door, an utter deed of love,
Transforming day's evil darkness . . .

And again,

We should love but cannot love being as we are

As the proletarian thinks of a comrade murdered and another
lynched and others in other lands shot down by the Fascists
he is driven to prefer open revolution to the hopeless inaction
of the present interim:

better to die better to feel that all wisdom
science and mastery have been turned against
you that they notice you and kill you . . .
better to die while heavy guns shake the
earth and it's all big and clear save us
from the peace between
wars. Fool fool every man's at war who's
hungry and hunted whether
in Omaha or Tokyo here they come. Here
they come. Look out
they mean business they mean an end to standing
in rain waiting for freights out of
Toledo and Detroit. Did we ever make
a town? a porterhouse? we were always just
this side of getting anything
or anywhere . . .
a hundred million of us coming
up those stairs in Spain in Mexico in India . . .
millions ready
to break the back of this muddle-born world.

For the revolutionary the outcome is certain. Here we have
the Marxian version of early Christian apocalyptic with its
imminent and predestined triumph. This is what "all Time
has willed."

A Poet and the Class Struggle

Do watch! do wait! the season nears its grain
And what is under way

starts wheels going worlds growing
and any man can live on earth when we're through
with it.

To be of the pioneers in this revolutionary procedure is to meet the truncheons of the police, mid-western jails, tear gas and riot guns. The usual foreshortening of the interim between us and the Millennium means that the crisis is imminent and that one lives in the anticipation of martyrdom. Yet without sentimentality.

We will no martyrs or legends
We can't get there by taxi-cab or sentiment.

Nevertheless, there is a sense of vocation which gives significance to the role of those that go forward to barrage and barricade: "they are conquerors of time and men." Their hardihood is related to the conditions of life of the workers. As a result of the long underworld existence they have not only the bodies but the tempering and the abandonment to be invincible.

we're not pretty we're as ugly as hell coming out of the holes
they dug for us to live in we're proud of our hardness
we've been picked to live because we could not die
they could not kill us even when our own were turned
against us they cannot make a dent in the iron faces
we've grown in the cellar of the world we've got
no pretty job to do we are the ugly logic whose beautiful
bones shall be the frame of all the body of wonder
which we can never know.

The single-mindedness is reinforced by a mystical sense of community with comrades throughout the world who suffer or die, whether famous martyrs like Lauro de Bosis or the un-

known. The resolute mood is maintained not by "words or dying themes Of flag or wooden guns": they are

a legion whose skill
Is best put forth by order of a public bond
In blood we've lost on every field of earth and sea.

And this vocation and solidarity in deprivation and crisis is one of elation, as the same poem says,

our country is the careless star in man.

This theme is best brought out in the account of an execution, *Joe Hill Listens to the Praying*. While the chaplain prays, and while the rifles are prepared, the mind of the condemned goes back to the dramatic hours of the social struggle in which he has taken part, various indomitable if forlorn apostles of the cause, the casual laborer's life, the "bumming" over the great west in mid-summer, the bounty and freshness of earth to these free spirits that had taken their lives in their hands, the epic incidents of strike and court-room, whose epic character had all the more moving quality for the unequal odds and the Main Street setting.

The homeless, the drifters, but, our songs
 had hair and blood on them.
There are no soap boxes in the sky.
We won't eat pie, now, or ever
 when we die,
 but Joe
We had something they didn't have:
 our love for these States
 was real and deep . . .
Let them burn us, hang us, shoot us,
 Joe Hill,
For at the last we had what it takes
 to make songs with.

It is a most important and a very delicate task to analyze

the social judgments that underlie such rebellion. One cannot but respond to the passionate aspirations that voice themselves in it. The devotion to what until now at least has been a forlorn hope in this country is a rebuke to the orthodox in church and state, so inclined to rest on their oars even in times of evident social distress. The aspects of our American order that a worker like Patchen meets are often such as to make understandable the absoluteness of his verdict. We must recognize, moreover, that where citadels of entrenched and arbitrary power establish themselves—and they establish themselves in all orders—the play of social forces cannot but lead to such crises and overturns as he envisages.

Precise estimates, however, of the good and bad of social institutions and forces are not easy. In particular, our supposed disinterested indignation is often complicated by hidden motives of a personal kind. The wisdom of such social judgments and such class aversion is only proportional to the amount of love for mankind that the critic brings to them. Otherwise he is only making an obscure series of transferences of personal traumas to an imagined social order, and is moving in illusions and fictions. We do not mean that an ideal critic or artist should take a remote and inactive view of the social order, but that there are few Isaiahs or Lincolns who may permit themselves a dogmatic view or the right to hate or the license of withering denunciation. The pure fire of zeal is too mixed with the fumes of bitterness in all of us. It is notable that at a number of points in *Before the Brave* Patchen shows himself disabused of any over-simple assignment of right and wrong in the issue between the classes, and that a plea for solution in terms of love rather than violence recurs.

ory of *Kathleen* is superb. But most of the poems are concerned with the themes above mentioned. If there is a limitation in scope it lies here: that Patchen powerfully presents the roles of victim and bully, but rarely adds the further reflection that some poets bring to their inquiry into evil. Jeffers can say of both victim and bully:

The man who'd not be seduced, not in hot youth,
By the angel of fools, million-worshipped success . . .
Has humbled himself to beg pleasure . . .
Whoever has discerned the vanity of water will desire wind.

And Yeats, speaking of both parties to the Irish civil war and implicitly of all our modern world.

We had fed the heart on fantasies,
The heart's grown brutal from the fare;
More substance in our enmities
Than in our love.

The technique of Patchen's second book is of extraordinary interest. The variety of devices, dramatic formulas, masks and tones that he adopts are not only unparalleled at many points but they are highly fitting expressions of his themes. The poems present, one may say, hundreds of excerpts from the sardonic or raging monologues of men of our time. (A character in one of the farce poems says: "I hear things talking in my head. . . . I swear that there are people in my head.") We are eavesdroppers on private horrors, maledictions, deliriums. We hear snatches of their convulsive reveries, phrases from trench or barricade, oaths or obscenities from brothel or sanitarium, defiances and blasphemies from concentration camps. The book is written in quick-lime and lava.

This isn't a poem This is a sob and a death-rattle.

Amos N. Wilder

R E V I E W S

INTO THE WORLD

Another Time: Poems, by W. H. Auden. Random House.

I SEEM to see Auden in the wilderness again, wondering whom he should talk to. There is a lot of clever stuff here, some of it thoughtful, some of it lighthearted, some of it sad, some of it thrown at us with a half-doubtful air of superior wisdom; but the bard who was beginning to take such a satisfactory shape behind the poems of his previous volume has dissolved again, and we are left with tantalizing fragments. And what is to be said about tantalizing fragments? Well, we needn't be altogether stumped. We can point out that Mr. Auden has now settled in America, and that the man who began his poetical career by asking, in several ways, What do you think about England, this country of ours where nobody is well? has now to extend his gaze, ask other questions, find a new eminence from which to observe his fellows. Give me a place to stand, the Greek philosopher said, and I shall move the earth. Auden may have found his new *pou sto* as a man, but he doesn't seem to have altogether done so as a poet. And this is not surprising. Like most of us in these days of crumbling civilizations, to understand what is wrong, and what he wants, he has to look beyond one country to the world. No longer are the English Public School and similar phenomena adequate sources of symbols; he must find more drastic and more universal kinds of statement. In changing his status from citizen of Britain to citizen of the World (and I think it *is* this, not simply U. S. citizen) his progress as a poet is held up while he finds his new

papers. And this is not easy. It took Auden quite a long time to clarify his position as the poet looking at England; it is natural that it should take him longer to find a satisfactory way of contemplating a larger and a more horrible domain.

Is this, then, the transition? Is the amount of competent but trivial verse here the result of Auden's marking time while he looks for a hillock or cleans his glasses? As he has nicely put it, in perhaps another connection:

All mankind, I fancy,
When anticipating
Anything exciting
Like a rendez-vous,
Occupy the time in
Purely random thinking,
For when love is waiting
Logic will not do. . . .
So I pass the time, dear,
Till I see you, writing
Down whatever nonsense
Comes into my head.

We may not be meant to interpret the "you" of this poem as the new vantage-point—indeed, it is pretty certain that we are not—but it is a fine unconscious analogy.

There are some fine poems in the volume—the one beginning "Wrapped in a yielding air," which is technically very accomplished and shows an exciting vein of poetic speculation; *School-children*, which has the impressiveness of diction so conspicuous in his last volume; the lovely singing lyric "Lay your sleeping head, my love," which one is glad to see now collected (why can't he do more like this?); the simple but highly effective "As I walked out one evening"; and a lot of the lighter poems are amusing (though there are many musical comedy librettists who could do at least as well). But the more ambitious pieces

are never quite satisfactory. *Spain* we have seen before, and here it is again with some minor alterations. I can't make up my mind about the poem. It has dignity and power, but lacks the final integration that fuses the separate images into a vivid and moving poetic whole. It is somehow unstuck. The faults of the other more serious poems in the volume are different. In the first place, what in God's name is Auden—who can handle language like a magician when he wants to—doing with so many flabby rhythms? Listen:

And went across each morning to an office
As though his occupation were another island.

And still all over Europe stood the horrible nurses
Itching to boil their children. Only his verses
Perhaps could stop them: He must go on working . . .

Steep roads, a tunnel through the downs are the approaches;
A ruined pharos overlooks a constructed bay . . .

Each group of lines is from a different poem, and this kind of flabbiness is all over the book. Is it carelessness, or a new subtlety that is beyond my ear?

There are quite a few fairly clever but not very impressive poems, written, as it seems, with nonchalant ability, such as the one on A. E. Housman. The Edward Lear poem is more striking, but again Auden seems more interested in shouting a bright idea at the reader than in writing well-dimensioned verse. Of the longer poems in the first section, "It's farewell to the drawing-room's civilized cry" has points, but it never seems to light up like so many of the poems (e.g. No. XXX) of the previous volume; it lacks the power to compel and to move, and the fault is not in the thought but in the expression. This is true, I think, of the poems on Melville, on Pascal and on Voltaire, though each has demonstrable merits. But we have learned to

expect more than demonstrable merits from Auden. Of the Occasional Poems (the third and final section of the volume) I liked the one on Toller best, but even here there were portions where the reader's emotion had to lend a hand to carry the poem over a bumpy part of the track. And the Yeats poem, though very fine in parts, contains too many lost statements. For the moment at least Auden's power of integration—the ultimate and supreme power of the poet—has failed. The concluding marriage ode is finely conceived but too brittle in expression; it tinkles where it should give out an organ sound. The poem in memory of Freud is perhaps the most stable in expression as well as conception of the six in the third group, yet for some dim reason I hesitate to say that it is the best.

If my whole view of Auden's development is right, this volume of poems can on the whole be best summed up in the good old French phrase "reculer pour mieux sauter." It is certainly not as good as his last, yet it has (I feel, and we all hope) more promise.

David Daiches

FOR A WIDER AUDIENCE

America Was Promises, by Archibald MacLeish. Duell, Sloan, & Pearce, Inc.

In the development of any considerable poet, there comes a point when, to insure progress and growth, he must either deliberately destroy aspects of his earlier method and ideology, or be forced to rework, in new combinations, old rhythms and phrases as well as old attitudes. Archibald MacLeish, if the evidence in this latest poem is valid, has been forced into the

latter position. Certainly, all that is said in this poem he has said before with more strength of implication and with greater creative vision. Perhaps, in his determination to continue to write in accents of public speech, Mr. MacLeish has consciously chosen the more obvious image, the more blatant rhythm. Perhaps those lines which seem such caricatures of MacLeishian statement:

Drank in public. went to bed in public.
Patronized the arts in public: pall'd with
Public authors public beauties: posed in
Public postures for the public page

are a deliberate display of tricks for a wider, uninitiated audience. If this is true, we may at least understand his retreat. If it is not, the passage must be but a prime indication of a lagging sense of proportion. Whatever his purpose, a long familiar repertoire comes tumbling out of the hat. The constant reader is confused with echoes from older works in turns of phrases, landscapes with the same sibilant trees, sudden, unusual punctuations. Even the few once clarion-bright messages are ineffectually underlined.

The poem as a whole is simply an exhortation to the democratic American people to "take" the promises that have been theirs since the coming of the founding fathers. Camera-like, the poet moves across the past of great men and waiting, endless country. Simultaneous with insights into the mind and circumstance of early America, the degradation of the democratic ideal is traced from the words of Jefferson to those of "the coarse ambitious priest" and those "who speak with gunstocks at the doors." The swing and purpose of the past is evoked; the withered and neurotic present is chastised. It is "The Aristocracy of Wealth and Talents" who are named for guilt, while

simpler men, "Companions of leaves: of the sun: of the slow evenings," are addressed as brothers. Finally, in an appeal made speciously forceful only by an almost hysterical use of exclamation points, the poet cries to the disparate nation:

O believe this!

This naïveté of statement, this oversimplification of political ideas, constitute the ultimate failure here. How the people are to "take" the promises they have rightfully inherited is nowhere made clear. If we are to believe stronger statements in Mr. MacLeish's earlier attempts at public speech, the way might be a revolutionary one. Here the implication is not as direct, unless we are to interpret the unsatisfactory

. . . take them
Brutally
With love but
Take them.

as an inflammatory passage.

Yet in spite of the many instances of emotion imperfectly met, Mr. MacLeish's honesty and sincerity manage to hold the poem together and fuse it with the beauty of a simple faith in a great idea. He has not altogether lost the felicity of cadence, the peculiar and resourceful faculty for translating native beauty that has marked all his work. More important among the virtues of the poem is the fact that it belongs in the tradition begun with *Public Speech*, and continued with *Fall of the City*, and *Air Raid*. This would indicate that the poet is moving away from the suspect faddism that has marked the progression of his many books. Whether Archibald MacLeish may ever truly become a poet of the people it is too early to say, yet his continued and healthy identification with progressive elements in politics, as well as in the larger realms of human

feeling, may well lead to that development. Above all, it is heartening to find that the man whose work has followed, as notes on a margin, the course of the major poetic attempts of his time, has at last apparently found root and inspiration in the vital contemporary struggle of the common man.

John Malcolm Brinnin

LLOYD FRANKENBERG'S POEMS

The Red Kite, by Lloyd Frankenberg. Farrar and Rinehart.

Mr. Frankenberg's verse is wide-eyed and wise both in its music and in its philosophy; it is melodic and naïve, even and innocent:

The rain goes searching lock and stock
For a dry spot to rest its feet,
The wind is in without a knock
And out and down the street.

At once both perceptive and dream-like:

The water lifts its arms dreaming of spars
or as confiding as an earnest child:

The sea-wall goes to show you can cut water

If the volume as a whole lacks brilliance, it possesses solidity, with fine edges here and there:

Laughs, with teeth against his own
Asking, am I always fair?
Will you always care?
Close with him day to day
Little dare by little dare
Death has quite undone his hair
Quite has kissed his lips away.

This poet possesses a change-of-pace also unusual in a first volume. He ranges from transparent lucidity to detail reminiscent of Hopkins:

long for granted. He sees it through a child's eyes and through the poet's, and the poet sees through his. Yet Lazarus come from the grave is a more bitter man than his master, and a doubting one:

He has robbed many graves (and he robbed mine) . . .
But he has not cheated the earth of a single skull.

His cynicism becomes that of the money-changers:

Who am I, God?
That I should change the order of things?

Finally:

And these my eyes that have been starved with tears
so that the stars of heaven swam therein
and the sun a great gold drop of glimmering fire,
these eyes that have searched long into the dark
and found an equal sightlessness in light,

they shall be blinder than two moons to peer
the reaches of the underworld and strain
to catch some glimpse of heaven through the earth.

This should please philosophers. As the conclusion will please only poets:

Silence will be the truth.

Nelson Algren

LYRIC AND NARRATIVE

Strange Dimension, by Florence Dickinson Stearns. Putnam's.
Scarlet Anne, by Theda Kenyon. Doubleday, Doran.

The first poem in Mrs. Stearns' book is called *Chart*, and I should like to quote it in full, because it is one of the best she has written, and because it sets the keynote for the rest and for her philosophy of life:

Diagram stars if you will,
Reckon some platinum moon,

No angle can compass the thrill
Of a mocking bird's tune.

There are stars in the soul of a man
A telescope never can follow.
No circle can better the plan
Of the nest in the willow.

The green perpendicular rise
To the curve of a rose
Is as great as the figured surprise
A micrometer shows.

A lens may be had for its hire
And the stars will reply,
But degrees cannot measure the fire
In a personal sky.

Mrs. Stearns' personal sky includes an interest in pretty nearly everything under the sun—she is as deeply absorbed in the mocking bird's tune for its own sake as for what it may mean to the man or woman who hears it. She is a Georgian by birth, a Virginian by adoption (though no professional Southerner, her *Ode to Richmond* is another of her most successful pieces), a relative of Emily Dickinson; she has been a newspaper woman, the advertising manager of a corporation in New York City, a teacher of poetry at William and Mary College Extension. She is—one feels from reading her work—lively, human, and charming: all of her poems are all of those things.

Technically, she uses conventional forms, which she has mastered thoroughly enough to be able to turn to unconventional uses; and even her more sentimental moods are saved from sentimentality by a pleasing touch of dry wit. Her subjects are the subjects of all lyric poets, Nature and Love (are there any others? and do we not often feel that the second is included in the first?); but "Strange Dimension" is set apart from the vast number of slim volumes on similar themes by two virtues:

the author's easy use of her medium and the completeness with which she has managed to convey the animation of her personality into her verse.

This reader feels bound to confess that he had never heard of Anne Hutchinson, the heroine of Theda Kenyon's novel in verse. After finishing *Scarlet Anne* he consulted the *Britannica* and gained a clearer, if more prosaic, idea of the valiant and uncompromising woman, who came to the new-founded colony of Massachusetts early in the seventeenth century with her husband, a dissenting minister; became involved in the famous Antinomian Heresy; fought nobly against the smothering weight of tradition and fanatical adherence to old beliefs that had caused her to leave her English home; and perished at last in the wilderness, murdered by the Indians who understood her as little as the members of the colony that had driven her out as a witch.

Here is certainly a dramatic subject for a novel, one peculiarly American in theme as well as in background; and Anne Hutchinson, though she lived three hundred years ago, is a heroine after the modern heart—restless, fearless, an imaginative individualist, born out of the proper time and place. Miss Kenyon sees Anne plainly, and describes her convincingly, as, indeed, she also describes the other characters in the story. Therefore it is a pity that she has chosen to write her book in such a way that the reader's interest is but feebly ensnared, falters fitfully all too often, and escapes forever long before the tragic conclusion is reached.

One hesitates to say that *Scarlet Anne* should have been done in prose; for it might have made a very good poetic novel. Miss Kenyon has told her tale in a jumble of varying styles and

rhythms, including numerous more-or-less lyric intermezzos, songs, and other rhymed passages, some of which are rather moving. But the body of the novel consists of blank verse of the peculiarly ugly and limping sort which characterizes most modern attempts in this form. It bumps along, page after page, through lines like these

Winthrop has a theory that King Charles
Is so far removed from the actual conditions
In this his Colony that it is best
Not to disturb the royal rest with our troubles. . .
In fact—he is very considerate of the King;
And always entirely respectful in mentioning him.

Not all of *Scarlet Anne* is so drearily pedestrian as this, but a great deal of it is. On the other hand, it is only fair to state that the publishers declare Miss Kenyon's work has "the irresistible surge and movement of martial music"

Arthur Meeker, Jr.

CAMPION, MUSICAL POET

England's Musical Poet, Thomas Campion, by Miles Merwin Kastendieck. Oxford University Press.

To one who knows the present state of music in England, it may be a little surprising to realize that the English were once the most musical people in Europe. In his scholarly and lucid study of Thomas Campion, Dr. Kastendieck offers a sympathetic portrait of an artist who represents both the high importance of music in the Elizabethan period and the near relation which the music of the time had to lyric poetry. The great age of lyric poetry, the Elizabethan period, was also the

great age of music in England. In the work of Thomas Campion, as Dr. Kastendieck presents it, the two arts arrived at a mutuality of inspiration from which both have subsequently departed.

The modern conception of song, Kastendieck says, differs radically from the Elizabethan view. Since Schubert, who developed the art-song as opposed to the lyric, the accompaniment has dominated both voice and melody. Mendelssohn and Liszt made the song virtually independent of words. Finally, as Kastendieck observes, the voice element has become a mere recitation of words to a separate orchestral work, as in Deems Taylor's music for Alfred Noyes' poem, *The Highwayman*.

In the Elizabethan song, however, words and music are complementary. The song writers of the time believed in tonal equivalence; as Campion says in the preface to his *Two Bookes of Ayres*, "I haue aymed chiefly to couple my Words and Notes louingly together . . ." The result of this coupling was the Elizabethan "ayre," which Dr. Kastendieck views as a definite art form and which Campion did most to establish.

It was Campion's *Book of Ayres*, written with Philip Rosseter, which definitely changed the fashion in lyrics from the madrigal or part-song to the air or solo-song. Previously, as in the book of songs by the famous lutanist John Dowland in 1597, the air had kept a part-song arrangement, though Dowland gave most emphasis to the upper voice. The Rosseter-Campion book, as Kastendieck says, established the air "in its pure form of a solo melody with lute accompaniment."

By 1619 Campion had published three more books of airs and had won a reputation as an author of masks second only to Ben Jonson. In the field of criticism, he had written two

important treatises, one on the art of poetry and one on the kindred art of music.

Born three years after Shakespeare, Campion had a career typical of the age. As the son of well-to-do parents, he spent several years in residence at Cambridge, where he may have acquired the classical tastes reflected in his *Observations in the Art of English Poesie*. By 1586, Campion had joined the set of young art-enthusiasts who frequented Gray's Inn for the ostensible study of law. Like most men in the fashion, he wrote poems in Latin and English. His first publication, in 1595, was a collection of Latin poems, though English poems of his had been pirated as early as 1591.

Some time after the Gray's Inn period, Campion undertook the study of medicine—where or definitely when, scholars do not know. It is known, however, that Campion practiced medicine and achieved a certain eminence as a physician, thus becoming the master of a third art. Through his connections with persons involved in the sordid Overbury murder case, Campion was examined but seems not to have been implicated. He died in 1620.

Dr. Kastendieck has important chapters on the nature of Elizabethan music and its differences from later forms. The chief difference, he says, is in the relative influence of rhythm, melody, and harmony. In modern music, harmony is dominant, but in Elizabethan practice it was only incidental, while rhythm and melody prevailed. The Elizabethan form was largely based upon the needs and capacities of the voice; and thus the lyric song was the most typical music of the period.

On the general relation of music to poetry, Kastendieck's book should be of interest to students of both arts. In his emphasis

upon the fact that the Elizabethan lyric, the prototype of the English lyric in general, was conditioned by music, the author makes a point often ignored by critics. Through his study of Campion, Dr. Kastendieck believes that in the work of the poet-musician "words and music were usually composed spontaneously and simultaneously," a practice of much significance for the interpretation of the Elizabethan lyric and for the large and important class of poetry to which this form has given rise.

Thomas Howells

NEWS NOTES

THE NEWS of Edwin Markham's death, which occurred on March 7th at the age of eighty-seven, probably caused a good many of us to reread *The Man With the Hoe* and to realize, all over again, what an impressive poem it is. Its popularity is an interesting phenomenon—largely sentimental, perhaps: the tribute of a vague social ardor which never went very deep, and still doesn't go very deep, into our thought and conduct. But this in no way affects the validity of the poem. The best proof of its merit is the fact that, for all the mock piety surrounding it and exploiting it, it has never come to look cheap or silly. It is as stirring today as it ever was, and still seems to be what someone called it when it was first published: "the battle cry of the next thousand years."

The funeral services for Markham were held before a large congregation in All Souls Universalist Church, Brooklyn, on March 10th. The burial will be at Los Angeles, beside his wife's grave. Among the messages from poets which were read at the funeral was a letter from Edgar Lee Masters, who wrote: "He was wholly American in the best tradition, in the Emerson manner, full of high seriousness, which put him so much in contrast with clever innovators, with crackling thorns under the pot. I saw him but once when we talked. It was in Chicago about 1918, with Harriet Monroe present. Even then he seemed old—but how vital and alert he was, how responsive to everything!"

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Stanford University offers again this year the Maxwell Anderson Award for Verse Drama, carrying two hundred dollars and a guaranty of

production at Stanford. The prize is not intended to encourage the revival of traditional forms, but "to stimulate vigorous modern drama in a verse derived from natural cadences of contemporary speech." Orson Welles will be the final judge, and the closing date for entry is May 1st. This and three other awards (for prose comedy, dramatic criticism, and dramatic sketches) are features of an annual competition "in connection with a summer of studies and productions in early and modern comedy"—the general aim being to encourage a national theatre and to give an audience to new playwrights and critics. Manuscripts and inquiries should be addressed to Proctor for Drama Awards, English Department, Stanford University, California.

James Laughlin, editor of *New Directions*, Norfolk, Conn., announces that he is preparing an anthology of *Five Young American Poets*, to be published in the fall, and that "a place is open in the volume for a young woman poet who has not yet published a book."

A competitive scholarship for summer study in writing under Sidney Cox is again announced by the trustees of the Cummington School. It will provide tuition and living expenses for ten weeks. Those who wish to enter should file applications before May 1st, but should not send specimens of their work until notified to do so. The competition is open to men and women who have completed secondary school, who have done "considerable serious writing," and who cannot finance their study without full aid. Application blanks and instructions may be obtained from the Registrar, Cummington School, Cummington, Mass.

Frances Shimer College, Mount Carroll, Ill., is sponsoring its sixth annual scholarship competition in the fine arts. Poetry is one of the nine fields in which scholarships of two hundred to four hundred dollars will be awarded. Young women high school students (juniors and seniors) of all communities are invited to apply. Tryouts will be held by faculty members in Chicago on Saturday, April 20th, and Saturday, May 4th. The third and final competition will be held at the college on Saturday, May 18th.

An interesting recent event at Frances Shimer was the presentation of Archibald MacLeish's *Land of the Free* as a drama. It was played against a bare brick backstage wall, by actors dressed in overalls and work clothes—a chorus of eleven reciting the major portion of the poem, with soloists carrying certain lines. The adaptation was made by Lawrence Carra, director of dramatics at the college.

Four more poets' readings have been scheduled in the excellent series given at the Poetry Center of the Young Men's Hebrew Association, 92nd Street and Lexington Avenue, New York City: April 8th, Oscar Williams; April 17th, Marianne Moore; May 6th, Denis Devlin, the young Irish poet who recently came to New York, and May 22nd, Norman Macleod, who is director of the Poetry Center. A number of other poets, most of them also contributors to *POETRY*, have given readings. In May the Center

will issue an anthology, under the title *Calendar*, of poems written by those who have appeared on the programs. It will be published by the Prairie Press.

Pilgrim's Progress. The date of the Harriet Monroe broadcast in the "Pilgrimage of Poetry" series has been changed again, this time to April 14th, at 1:00 p.m. EST

That scourge and guardian of mores, *The New Yorker*, has just thrown down a gauntlet to the whole tribe of poets. Commenting in its first-page notes on the finals of the Golden Gloves competition, this fearless journal reports that among the contestants were "chefs, valets, porters, truck-drivers, Western Union messengers," also "a beautician, a landscape architect, a tap-dancer, and a man at work on a Ph. D. thesis," and concludes: "We were a little disappointed to find no poets entered. If a poet is any good he is completely in tune with his time. Walt Whitman would have been right in there, slugging it out with a landscape architect or a beautician. The trouble with poetry today is that it is too effete and disassociated. As far as we know, Stephen Vincent Benét wasn't even interested enough to get up and go to the Garden."

We suspect and hope that there have already been painful consequences. To begin with, it is possible to scent a bard in that beautician. Who knows how many poets—contributors of POETRY or even *The New Yorker*—were in there mixing it up under noms de guerre? In an editorial on "Office Visitors" in these pages for September 1935, Harriet Monroe recalled: "A champion prize-fighter, in submitting a long narrative about taking his friend's girl for a drive and a glass of soda (no tragedy involved), asked for secrecy on publication, as his professional friends might laugh at his achieving poetic fame" This, of course, was a professional boxer who dallied with poetry; but conversely it is reasonable to suppose that certain poets may go in for a little slugging in their dull moments, on amateur nights. And what makes *The New Yorker* think that it would recognize Mr. Benét, or any other poet, in fighting apparel?

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ELDER OLSON, of Chicago, has appeared often in POETRY and in 1933 received our Guarantors Prize. He is the author of a book of verse, *Thing of Sorrow*, and has completed a new book-length sequence of poems, *The Cock of Heaven*, to be published soon by the Macmillan Company. He is a member of the English faculty at Armour Tech.

WILLARD MAAS, of New York, is the author of two books of poems, *Fire Testament* and *Concerning the Young*. He was awarded the Guarantors Prize in 1938. Recently he has been working on the soundtrack for a poetic documentary film.

H. B. MALLALIEU, a young English poet resident in London, was introduced to our readers two years ago and was awarded the Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize in 1939. He writes: "I am not at all enthusiastic about this war, but I suppose I shall have to join in it when I'm called. I expect that will be about May"

LANGSTON HUGHES, the distinguished Negro poet, has contributed to POETRY since 1926 and is the author of several books of verse and fiction, including *The Weary Blues*, *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, *Not Without Laughter*, etc.

EUGENE JOLAS, now resident in New York, is the founder and editor of *Transition*, and has published widely in magazines.

GLADYS CAMPBELL first appeared here in 1927, and has contributed poems to *The Dial* and other magazines. She is on the college faculty of the University of Chicago, where she was one of the founders of the Poetry Club and first editor of *The Forge*.

JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN, of Baltimore, has contributed often to POETRY and other magazines, and is now president of the Poetry Society of Maryland. A new book of her poems, *Let Each Man Remember*, will be published this month.

CHARLES HENRI FORD, now living in Norwalk, Conn., is the author of a book of poems, *The Garden of Disorder*. A new collection of his work, *The Overturned Lake*, will soon be published by New Directions.

FLORENCE DICKINSON STEARNS, of Richmond, Va., has contributed to many magazines and is the author of a recent book of poems, *Strange Dimension*

HOWARD BLAKE was born in Wollaston, Mass., in 1907 and now lives in Boston. He is the author of a book of poems, *Prolegomena to Any Future Poetry*

WILLIAM EMPSON, the well-known English writer, is the author of *Poems* (Faber & Faber) and of two critical volumes, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* and *English Pastoral Poetry*.

The following three poets make their first appearance here.

WILLIAM JUSTEMA was born in 1905 in Chicago but has lived mostly in California. He is interested equally in writing and painting, and has exhibited successfully as a painter. He is now in New York, working on decorative design and writing a novel.

JEANNE MCGAHEY was born in 1906 on the Oregon coast and now lives in Berkeley, Calif. She has contributed to *The New Republic* and in 1934 won the Emily Chamberlain Cook prize for poetry at the University of California. She is a member of the poetry group directed by Lawrence Hart in San Francisco.

LIU TYNG KWEI is a native of Peiping and a student at the National University of Peking, which was evacuated to Kuming in 1938, "as soon as the Double Seventh Accident began to fall" He has contributed to magazines published in China.

All but the first of this month's prose contributors have appeared previously:

AMOS N. WILDER, of Newton Centre, Mass., will publish through Harpers next month a critical study, *Spiritual Aspects of the New Poetry*. He is a brother of Thornton and Charlotte Wilder. CHARLES HANSON TOWNE, the distinguished New York writer and editor, is an old friend of Edwin Markham. DAVID DAICHES, of the University of Chicago faculty, is the author of a recent book of criticism, *The Novel and the Modern World*. He has appeared several times as poet and critic. JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN, of Ann Arbor, Mich., has contributed poems and criticism to magazines, and last year received our Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize. ARTHUR MEEKER, JR., of Chicago, is the author of several novels, the most recent being *Sacrifice to the Graces*. THOMAS HOWELL'S has appeared several times with poems and criticism. He is a graduate of the University of Chicago and is now on the faculty of Whitman College. NELSON ALGREN, of Chicago, is a member of the *New Anvil* staff, and the author of a novel, *Somebody in Boots*.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman. Henry Holt & Co.
Elbow Room, by Oliver St. John Gogarty. Cuala Press, Dublin.
Poems, by Roy Fuller. Fortune Press, London.
Poems, by Glyn Jones. Fortune Press.
38 Poems, by Henry Treece. Fortune Press.
Now There Is Beauty and Other Poems, by Sister M. Therese. Macmillan Co.
Woven of the Sky, by Sister Miriam. Macmillan Co.
Renewal, by Pearl Hogrefe. Prairie Press, Muscatine, Ia.
Selected Poems, by Dallas Kenmare. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, England.
No Special Pleading, by Mary Ballard Duryee. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
Through the Emerald, by Marjorie Sanborn. Mosher Press.
Rus, by E. M. Almedingen. Oxford Univ. Press.
Marguerite, by Rae S. Neely. Univ. of Georgia Press, Athens, Ga.
Heaven's Gold Rings, by H. M. Ratliff, Jr., Ace Printing Co., San Antonio, Tex.

ANTHOLOGY AND PROSE:

The New Oxford Book of English Verse, chosen and edited by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch. Oxford Univ. Press.
Reality and the Poet in Spanish Poetry, by Pedro Salinas. Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore.

[Remaining books will be listed next month.]

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XX
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POETRY *for May* 1940



| | | |
|---|-------------------------|-----|
| Ten Poems | LOUIS MACNEICE | 59 |
| Prognosis — Obituary — O'Connell Bridge — Entirely — Order to View — I Am That I Am — Three Thousand Miles — The British Museum Reading Room — Perdita — Stylite | | |
| Raleigh Was Right | WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS | 69 |
| To Napoleon, in an Evil Time | BABETTE DEUTSCH | 70 |
| Three Poems | WELDON KEES | 72 |
| White Collar Ballad — Poem — Praise to the Mind | | |
| To Rimbaud | HARRY ROSKOLENKO | 74 |
| Orders for the Day | THEODORE ROETHKE | 75 |
| Three Poems | LIONEL ABEL | 76 |
| The Midwives of History — Sign — Death at Lenin's Tomb | | |
| Water and Time Divide the World Too Much | DONAGH MACDONAGH | 81 |
| Three Poems | KENNETH FEARING | 82 |
| Discussion After the Fifth or Sixth — Pay-off — 5 A. M. | | |
| Louis MacNeice: The Artist as Everyman | JULIAN SYMONS | 86 |
| Reviews: | | |
| The Rimbaud Mystery Clarified | PHILIP BLAIR RICE | 95 |
| A Dramatic Gift | ALFRED KREYMBORG | 101 |
| Or It Can Be | ELSA GIDLOW | 104 |
| Direct Poems | WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT | 106 |
| Correspondence | WILLIAM EVERSON | 108 |
| News Notes | | 109 |
| Notes on Contributors | | 112 |
| Books Received | | 114 |

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LVI

NO. II

MAY 1940

TEN POEMS

PROGNOSIS

GOODBYE, Winter,
The days are getting longer,
The tea-leaf in the teacup
Is herald of a stranger.

Will he bring me business
Or will he bring me gladness
Or will he come for cure
Of his own sickness?

With a pedlar's burden
Walking up the garden
Will he come to beg
Or will he come to bargain?

Will he come to pester,
To cringe or to bluster,
A promise in his palm
Or a gun in his holster?

Will his name be John
Or will his name be Jonah
Crying to repent
On the island of Iona?

Will his name be Jason
Looking for a seaman
Or a mad crusader
Without rhyme or reason?

What will be his message—
War or work or marriage?
News as new as dawn
Or an old adage?

Will he give a champion
Answer to my question
Or will his words be dark
And his ways evasion?

Will his name be Love
And all his talk be crazy?
Or will his name be Death
And his message easy?

OBITUARY

The dilatory prophet, flicking the ash
On the Bokhara rug said "Maybe yes;
When spring comes the markets will maybe crash,
Only the Unknown God can get us out of this mess.

Man is a political animal admittedly
But, politics being incalculable, I shall
With your permission pour myself another; I see
Nothing for it but to be animal."

And putting the weight of his doctorates aside
Took three fingers of Scotch and a cube of ice
And thought that, could he announce that he had died,
And so was no longer an expert, it would be nice;

And drank till two, staring into the fire
Seeing half-naked girls, and then having collected
His courtesy and his hat, soft-pedaling desire
Went out to find the world as bad as he expected.

Drunk and alone among the indifferent lights
In stark unending streets of granite and glass
He ducked his head to avoid illusory stalactites
And fell, his brain ringing with the noise of brass

Captions; the groundswell of the pavement, steady
As fate, rose up and caught him, rolled him below
A truck—this ex-professor who had already
Outlived his job of being in the know.

O'CONNELL BRIDGE

Barrel-organ music:
The cold gold falls
From the lamps on the Liffey
In the chilly wind
And the crinkling river
Shivers the lights,
And night's companions
Are far to find.

Flotsam and jetsam
Our one-while loves
Blown like bubbles
In the trough of the sea,
Who are not the only
Lonely in bed:
I dread the darkness—
A mound on me.

Barrel-organ music—
A hackney cockney tune,
A rain of riches
In a lady's lap;
I give in answer
Not dance or spoken
Token but only
A coin in a cap.

ENTIRELY

If we could get the hang of it entirely
It would take too long;
All we know is the splash of words in passing
And falling twigs of song,
And when we try to eavesdrop on the great
Presences it is rarely
That by a stroke of luck we can appropriate
Even a phrase entirely.

If we could find our happiness entirely
In somebody else's arms
We should not fear the spears of the spring nor the city's
Yammering fire alarms
But, as it is, the spears each year go through
Our flesh and almost hourly
Bell or siren banishes the blue
Eyes of Love entirely.

And if the-world were black or white entirely
And all the charts were plain
Instead of a mad weir of tigerish waters,
A prism of delight and pain,
We might be surer where we wished to go
Or again we might be merely
Bored but in brute reality there is no
Road that is right entirely.

ORDER TO VIEW

It was a big house, bleak,
Grass on the drive;
We had been there before
But memory, weak in front of
A blistered door, could find
Nothing alive now;
The shrubbery dripped, a crypt
Of leafmould dreams; a tarnished
Arrow over an empty stable
Shifted a little in the almost wind,

And wishes were unable
To rise; on the garden wall
The pear trees had come loose
From rotten loops; one wish,
A rainbow bubble, rose,
Faltered, broke in the dull
Air—What was the use?
The bell-pull would not pull
And the whole place, one might
Have supposed, was deadly ill:
The world was closed,

And remained closed until
A sudden angry tree
Shook itself like a setter
Flouncing out of a pond
And beyond the sombre line
Of limes a cavalcade

Of clouds rose like a shout of
Defiance. Near at hand
Somewhere in a loose-box
A horse neighed
And all the curtains flew out of
The windows; the world was open.

I AM THAT I AM

In the beginning and in the end the only decent
Definition is tautology: man is man,
Woman woman, and tree tree, and world world,
Slippery, self-contained; catch as catch can.

Which when caught between the beginning and end
Turn other than themselves, their entities unfurled,
Flapping and overlapping—a tree becomes
A talking tower, and a woman becomes world.

Catch them in nets, but either the thread is thin
Or the mesh too big or, thirdly, the fish die
And man from false communion dwindles back
Into a mere man under a mere sky.

But dream was dream and love was love and what
Happened happened—even if the judge said
It should have been otherwise—and glitter glitters
And I am I although the dead are dead.

THREE THOUSAND MILES

Now he can hardly press
The heavy pedals of thought,
Tired of what he wants
And sick of what he ought,
He is content to watch
The window fill with snow
Making even the Future
Seem long ago.

Knowing that in Europe
All the streets are black
And that stars of blood
Star the almanac,
One half-hour's reprieve
Drowns him in the white
Physical or spiritual
Inhuman night.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM READING ROOM

Under the hive-like dome the stooping haunted readers
Go up and down the alleys, tap the cells of knowledge—
Honey and wax, the accumulation of years—
Some on commission, some for the love of learning,
Some because they have nothing better to do
Or because they hope these walls of books will deaden
The drumming of the demon in their ears.

Cranks, hacks, poverty-stricken scholars,
 In pince-nez, period hats or romantic beards
 And cherishing their hobby or their doom
 Some are too much alive and some are asleep
 Hanging like bats in a world of inverted values,
 Folded up in themselves in a world which is safe and silent:
 This is the British Museum Reading Room.

Out on the steps in the sun the pigeons are courting,
 Puffing their ruffs and sweeping their tails or taking
 A sun-bath at their ease
 And under the totem poles—the ancient terror—
 Between the enormous fluted Ionic columns
 There seeps from heavily jowled or hawk-like foreign faces
 The guttural sorrow of the refugees.

PERDITA

The glamour of the end attic, the smell of old
 Leather trunks—Perdita, where have you been
 Hiding all these years? Somewhere or other a green
 Flag is waving under an iron vault
 And a brass bell is the herald of green country
 And the wind is in the wires and the broom is gold.

Perdita, what became of all the things
 We said that we should do? The cobwebs cover
 The labels of Tyrol. The time is over-
 Due and in some metropolitan station
 Among the clank of cans and the roistering files
 Of steam the caterpillars wait for wings.

STYLITE

The saint on the pillar stands,
The pillar is alone,
He has stood so long
That he himself is stone;
Only his eyes
Range across the sand
Where no one ever comes
And the world is banned.

Then his eyes close,
He stands in his sleep,
Round his neck there comes
The conscience of a rope,
And the hangman counting
Counting to ten—
At nine he finds
He has eyes again.

The saint on the pillar stands,
The pillars are two,
A young man opposite
Stands in the blue,
A white Greek god,
Confident, with curled
Hair above the groin
And his eyes on the world.

Louis MacNeice

RALEIGH WAS RIGHT

We cannot go to the country
for the country will bring us
no peace

What can the small violets
tell us that grow on furry stems
in the long grass among
lance-shaped leaves?

Though you praise us
and call to mind the poets
who sung of our loveliness it was
long ago!
long ago!
when country people
would plow and sow with
flowering minds and pockets
at ease—if ever this were true.

Not now. Love itself a flower
with roots in a parched ground.
Empty pockets
make empty heads. Cure it
if you can but do not believe
that we can live today
in the country
for the country will bring us
no peace.

William Carlos Williams

TO NAPOLEON, IN AN EVIL TIME

The stones of Paris now
Are married to the dark,
And if beneath the bulk
Of your huge tomb remains
More than black rags and bones,
The very tomb withdraws
Into the dark. Your fame
Is poorer than it was
When, as a sallow boy,
Plutarch was all your meat
And vengeance your thin joy.
That feast is for the rats;
Night kings it in the street.

Let us not speak of kings,
But hospitals and pain.
The strange disease resumes,
The old wounds ache again,
And new adhesions cry
For dreadful surgery.
You, having grown too fat,
Upon your island fed
Your cancer and your pride.
Poetic Fate allows
It was of these you died.
But who will cut the growth
That gnaws at Europe now?

Exiles and prisoners
 And soldiers do not make
 A world, but some there are
 Whom terror cannot take
 From their deliberate toil.
 They know you, little man,
 The fear behind the frown,
 The thought you could not bear
 Who wore the iron crown.
 They know your eyes, whose stare
 Reflected in the glass
 Was Caesar's and is theirs
 When they are left alone.

Ah, Buonaparte, here
 Amid the stony dark
 Where every wall is deaf,
 The disenchanted heart
 Cries out upon itself.
 The plague, the shame is clear.
 Puny imperial ghost,
 You who so meanly lost
 And once so greatly willed:
 The coward violence,
 The thievish love is here
 Deep in the private breast.
 And here you must be killed.

Babette Deutsch

THREE POEMS

WHITE COLLAR BALLAD

There are lots of places to go:
Guaranteed headaches at every club,
Plush and golden cinemas that always show
How cunningly the heroine and hero rub
Put on your hat, put on your gloves.
But there isn't any love, there isn't any love.

There are endless things we could do:
Walk around the block, watch the skaters whirl,
Promenade the park or see the newest zoo,
Plan for the future in a sensible world.
The water boils on the stove,
But there isn't any love, there isn't any love.

Our best friends lived in the house next door.
Went around to call on them the other day,
But they hadn't left an address or a word before
They packed their bags and moved away.
We could call on the people on the floor above,
But there wouldn't be any love, there wouldn't be any love.

It didn't use to be like this at all.
You wanted lots of money and I got it somehow.
Once it was Summer. Here it's almost Fall.
It isn't any season now.
There are seasons in the future to be thinking of,
But there won't be any love, there won't be any love.

POEM

*J'ai plus de souvenirs que
si j'avais mille ans.*

—Baudelaire

Memories rich as Proust's or Baudelaire's are yours,
You think: snarled ravelings of doubt at evenings; scents
Of women, dazed with pleasure, whose white legs and arms
Once coiled with languor around you; arguments
With undistinguished friends, their bigotries each year
More fixed. Lamps in the mist that light strange faces fill
Your nights; your fingers drum upon the table as you stare,
Uncertain, at the floor. *Un vieux boudoir?* Impossible!
You frequently compare yourself to those whose memories
Are cruel, contemptible, like naked bone.

Yet, is there anything in this rank richness warm
Or permanent? At every climax, trapped, alone,
You seem to be a helpless passenger that drifts
On some frail boat; and with oblivious ease,
As from a distance, watch yourself
Disintegrate in foaming seas.

PRAISE TO THE MIND

Praise to the mind
That slowly grows
In solid breadth, that knows
Its varied errors, shows
And will admit
Its witlessness.

Praise to the single mind
That sees no street
Run through this world, complete,
That does not meet,
Bending at end,
Remorselessly, its source.

Praise to the mind
That moves toward meaning,
Kindness; mixes keenness
With routine of
Grace, has space,
And finds its place.

Weldon Kees

TO RIMBAUD

Lights! Lights! Illuminate the senses.
Court dull stone, woo enamored steel;
sleep in a flowery city you cannot feel.
Let in, through a thousand calm excesses
the white agony of your pure distresses.
Lights! Lights! O endless beacons
watched by a frustrate love that angels sing!
Whipped, worshipped stone, seeking
the gaudy spangle of some theist throne.
To mount in restless airs, a disordered city!
on prongs of ether and lacing inner pity.

Harry Roskolenko

ORDERS FOR THE DAY

Hands, hard and veined all over,
Perform your duties well,
For carelessness can smother
Decision's smoking fuse;
The flesh-bound sighing lover,
His clumsy fingers bruise
The spirit's tender cover.

Feet, bear the thin bones over
The stile of innocence,
Skirt hatred's raging river,
The dangerous flooded plain
Where snake and vulture hover,
And, stalking like a crane,
Cross marshland into clover.

Eyes, staring past another
Whose bogey-haunted look
Reveals a foolish mother,
Those barriers circumvent
And charity discover
Among the virulent.
Breath, turn the old blood over.

Theodore Roethke

THREE POEMS

THE MIDWIVES OF HISTORY

In what way ancient, in what way oldest,
Aproned with the late newspapers;
Tell me why I must accept
The regulation bayonets
In your rude printed hands as noble.
Show me your eternal posture
Made clear by dark of ages gone
O modern city-colored sages!

Midwives! ninth-month sages sent
To help our drastic future from
The vast vague womb of history,
Resisters of the resistance to birth,
I know you now! Yes, you shall use
The filth and perfidy of force
And try what tricks of blood you must
In birth's immoderate politics.

Even that ninth-month sage of mind,
Humorous, clear-eyed Socrates,
Tranquil in a landscape of young men arguing,
Sterilizes a murderous instrument;
While calm as he, red-handed on
Red-hearted hills as old as grief,
The first midwives, in the nights of biology,
Bearded grandmas raise granite knives.

SIGN

I stand North, East,
 West and South, pointing
 with impotent universality now that
 everything points
 away from his whereabouts,
 now that he is

Too large for the
 home and the theatre, the park, the
 cafe; too dark for
 the stadiums of
 athletes and music,
 and summer places;

And too prudent for
 the places that lie
 between other places,
 the place that in one
 breath is two places;
 so abrupt and so rude
 for adorable places;

Too loose for water
 and single for land,
 too eager for fire
 and random for air,
 so hard against
 whatever whispers
 of space remember,
 and so delicate
 he would die in
 a credible place.

DEATH AT LENIN'S TOMB

His flesh greyed to marble, when Death regards it,
Is surely ridiculous:
So much medicined just to dissemble
How vulnerable it was.
His soul? also ridiculous,
Disallowed any credible place.
And nevertheless Death is not disposed
To regard him with ridicule.

His ideas . . . if his ideas
Are not also contradicted
In particular his idea
Of dissolving man's quarrel with man,
Uniting all men against Death. . . .
The man is not wholly dead,
Not done with history . . .
Dead and not dead . . . and Death,
The Professional of the Past,
Must have a care for the morrow
And horror of history. . . .

If this dead man is too subtle
To be wholly dead
Many subtle deaths must go:
Death the diplomat,
Death the general,

Death the boss,
 As Death the long night
 When fire was struck,
 As Death the distance
 When the first wheel rolled,
 As Death the sacrifice fell
 With the stone bowels of God!

If this man is too subtle to be wholly dead
 All subtle deaths must exit, go
 As the body goes;
 As the enigmatic human face
 Goes to facilitate the grass
 All mystifying deaths must go
 To return natural, naive,
 As the snowfall,
 The rainstorm,
 The animals,
 As the walking by water of a bright morning
 Listening to a clear bird.

And Death once become transparent for man
 Shall mystify Death: Death
 Soliloquizing to increase confidence,
 Escaping into a legend,
 Death in need of a poem
 Like "The Bullets of Blood are Eternal,"
 Death afraid of Death's own craft, aircraft and anti-aircraft,

Possible models
For an anti-angel gun!

Death recites this enemy's violent vision
Here by the enemy's tomb,
Not in mockery, not in dread,
Rather respectful of such drastic illusion,
Pious before what is not to be.
Yet mindful of the irony
That this tomb is instrument
Of deaths so sophisticate
As Death the bureaucrat,
Death the theorist,
As that most subtle
Death the plan.

Lionel Abel

WATER AND TIME DIVIDE THE WORLD TOO MUCH

Water and time divide the world too much
So that we shiver under the winter's whip
Sunless and dazed who can command no ship
To bear us to the south; and time is such
That hands however strong can never rip

• Its potent web binding us in today.
Time has divided us from all dead lovers,
All beauty that once had power and life that hovers
Now only in portrait of one mood. The gay
Or melancholy face is gone; paint covers

Canvas, conserving past with greater ease
Than we can hope for. Watcher from Saturn's ring
Might see that ignoble quarrel of a king
At cross-roads, and find no drama in what he sees,
Knowing, as we, the present of everything.

Donagh MacDonagh

THREE POEMS

DISCUSSION AFTER THE FIFTH OR SIXTH

Now, about that other one, the sober one,
(To be objective, for a change, about one's public self. After
all, each of us has that stupider side)

Yes, you have seen him around, that self-appointed Dr. Jekyll
who shares (reluctantly) by day this name and being with
his Mr. Hyde (as he would put it) of the night,

Yes, him,

That fellow with this face, this voice, and even (by some crash-
ing magic we will not go into now) possessed with a few
of the same superficial traits,

That one whose first awakening voice is a hoarse, barbaric blast
(you know against whom), who damns the excess (how-
ever moderate), deplores the extravagance and winces (as
he reaches for the aspirin) at the smallest memory,

That fellow with the curdled eyes and not quite steady hands
(poor guy, he must be slipping), to say nothing of a dis-
position that is really a wonderful, wonderful thing in
itself,

Yes, well, now that you have the picture, take him,
And all his pathetic protests and his monumental vows to
abstain, totally, forthwith (these need not concern us here)
(Two more of the same)

But, more especially, his pious recantations and denials, his
ceaseless libel of one who is (why dodge the issue?) his
mental, physical, and yes, moral superior—

But do you begin to see the point?

Because the point is this (he talks of self-respect, and decency is a favorite word of his), the point is this:

Does he think that he is the only one?

Does he think that he is the only man on earth who has felt this thing?

The only person ever to sit and watch the rain drive against the lighted windows, revolving at once some private trouble and knowing, for everything that breathes, a cold, impersonal dismay?

From which (drinking, he says, is just an escape) he searches daily, down a thousand familiar avenues, for an escape that simply does not exist,

(Those Chinese dreams he palms as reality, those childish ambitions, and then that transparent guile of his)

That fool (who must, it seems, be suffered) (but not gladly), that bore (and who has tolerated most? Has overlooked most? Which of us has forgiven most?), that fool in love with some frowsy fate that plays with him as a cat plays with a mouse,

That fool (and this, at last, is the question), what would his decency amount to, but for the simple decency of this escape?

And if this is not true,

If this is not the final truth, then no one here is drunk, drunk as a sovereign Lord of France,

If this is not the inescapable truth, then the night is not dark
but bright as day, and the lights along the street are not
really made of burning pearls and rubies dipped in liquid
fire,
If this is not true, the truth itself, as hard as hell and stronger
than death,
Then time does not fly but life grows younger by the hour, and
the rain is not falling, falling, everywhere falling,
And there are not, here, only pleasant sights and sounds and
a pleasant warmth.

PAY-OFF

Do you, now, as the news becomes known,
And you have the telegram still in your hand, here in the fa-
miliar room where there is no sound but the ticking of the
clock,
Or there on the street, where you see the first headlines, and it
is true this time, really true, actual as the green and red
of the traffic lights, as real as the fruit vendor's rhythmic cry,
Do you recall any being other than this, before your world
suddenly shook and settled to this new, strange axis upon
which it will turn, now, always while you live?
Does it seem possible, now, you were ever bored? Or drunk
and confident? Or sober and afraid?
Will the sound of the clock ever fade, or the voice of the
vendor sometime stop?

5 A.M.

Street by street the lights go out, and the night turns grey,
bringing respite to this and to all other agencies,
With the gears of commerce unmeshed and stopped, the channels
of communication slowed and stilled,
(Radio, ticker, and spirit control)

Bringing peace, briefly, to the members of the board and bench
and staff,

Sleep, for a space, to the journeymen of the switchboard and
the dictaphone,

Rest to the lieutenants of steel, and wool, and coal, and wheat,
And to the envoys from abroad (Her Majesty's, His Excellency's,
and the mysterious Mr. X)

And to the representatives of the people (both houses), and
to the vicars of the Lord (conformist and dissident)

And to the inspectors of the arson, forgery, bomb, and homicide
squads,

While the crated shipments of this agency (with those of others)
stand in guarded sheds at Quebec,

Wait for release on rainswept wharves of Shanghai and the Rio,
Move, slowly, from a dark siding in Butte.

Kenneth Fearing

LOUIS MACNEICE: THE ARTIST AS EVERYMAN

WHAT is immediately obvious about the poems of Louis MacNeice is their simplicity. Simplicity is a rare quality in poetry. There are as few simple poets as there are difficult poets. To write simply is to write directly, in words that in themselves and in their aggregate may be understood and appreciated by an unsophisticated reader, a reader unfamiliar with the verse mannerisms of the time. Campion is a simple poet, but not Shelley. Wordsworth's early poems were simple, but not Wordsworth's later poems. There is little that is *difficult* in Shelley or the later Wordsworth: but their poems are not simple, they do not describe an event or feeling directly, but interpret it in terms of the poet's moral or philosophical imagination. When I say that Mr. MacNeice does not do this, I mean that he is not a moralist, as was Wordsworth, or an amateur philosopher, as was Shelley: I mean that he writes as an Ordinary Man.

"I would have a poet able-bodied, fond of talking, a reader of the newspapers, capable of pity and laughter, informed in economics, appreciative of women, involved in personal relationships, actively interested in politics, susceptible to physical impressions." That is a summing-up in Mr. MacNeice's *Modern Poetry: A Personal Essay*. We may feel that this is going much too far: that a good poet may be as physically feeble as Leopardi, as ill-informed economically as Rimbaud, as little interested in politics as Keats; but there is no question that Mr. MacNeice's words describe perfectly the man who writes most of Mr. MacNeice's poems. His words also described very well the Ordinary Man; the degree to which the Ordinary Man is informed in economics (which seems an odd requirement) will depend on his

education and intelligence: otherwise most men possess, in varying degrees, the interests and faculties required; and most men would be able to understand and appreciate Mr. MacNeice's poems. They would not appreciate the technical skill with which the poems are constructed; but that is a matter for the specialist, a matter of knowing how the machine works.

It is necessary to illustrate these statements. In Mr. MacNeice's collection of poems, *The Earth Compels*, I would say that more than two-thirds of the poems may rightly be called simple. Here are some quotations—from *Carrickfergus*:

I was born in Belfast between the mountain and the gantries
To the hooting of lost sirens and the clang of trams;
Thence to Smoky Carrick in County Antrim
Where the bottle-neck harbor collects the mud which jams
The little boats beneath the Norman castle,
The pier shining with lumps of crystal salt;
The Scotch Quarter was a line of residential houses
But the Irish Quarter was a slum for the blind and halt.

From *The Sunlight on the Garden*:

The sunlight on the garden
Hardens and grows cold,
We cannot cage the minute
Within its nets of gold,
When all is told
We cannot beg for pardon.

From *Hidden Ice*:

And I would praise our inconceivable stamina
Who work to the clock and calendar and maintain
The equilibrium of nerves and notions,
Our mild bravado in the face of time.

These are fair samples: the thought they contain is simple, and the words in which the thought is expressed are appropriate. The first extract is a fragment of the Ordinary Man's autobiography; the second is an expression of his weakness in a harsh

time; the last an indication of his courage in a harsh time. The other third of the poems in this book are another matter (notably *Chess*, *Circus*, *Homage to Clichés*, *Eclogue Between the Motherless*); the ordinary man would not like them: they are written in language which is not too difficult, but too strange for him. Mr. MacNeice differs from his ideal poet in being, first a scholar, and second a literary man who lives, as most scholars and literary men do, a little apart from the run of people. It is the scholar and the literary man who have written Mr. MacNeice's other poems, with their gleaming Bloomsbury wit and sophistication. It has taken some time for the Ordinary Man in Mr. MacNeice to gain the upper hand over the scholar. Here is the scholar writing in the foreword to Mr. MacNeice's first book of poems, *Blind Fireworks*:

Several of these poems are founded on an esoteric mythology. For instance Pythagoras is, for me, not the historical Pythagoras, but a grotesque, automatic Man-of-Science, who both explains and supports the universe by counting, having thus an affinity to Thor the Time-God.

Poems, published six years after *Blind Fireworks*, shows the Ordinary Man struggling with the literary scholar: in *The Earth Compels*, as I have indicated, he has the upper hand, and he is not likely to lose it.

2.

So far I have stated, and illustrated, a theory about Louis MacNeice's poems. The reader is assumed to have read the poems, or some of the poems, already, and to have made up his mind about them. In the rest of this essay I take the correctness of my theory for granted. I assume, that is to say, that the theory will make it possible to judge accurately the value of Mr. Mac-

Neice's poetry; there are, naturally, other possible approaches to his poetry which might give the same result.

In estimating the worth of Mr. MacNeice's poetic work, then, we have to ask: what is an Ordinary Man, what is his attitude to current events, and how will that attitude affect his poetry? The Ordinary Man is not the violently class-conscious worker; the number of violently class-conscious workers in England just now is small. The Ordinary Man is the manual worker who is not violently class-conscious, who aspires to be a black-coated petty bourgeois, the black-coated petty bourgeois who aspires to be a bourgeois with a little property, the bourgeois with a little property who would like to be a big landlord. The Ordinary Man is everybody *except* the violently class-conscious working class and what we still call the "upper class." He is at least three-quarters of the people of England. It is this great "class"—this "class" which desires social change, but is terrified by the violent instruments of social change—of which Mr. MacNeice is involuntarily the perfect representative. MacNeice's poems are the expression of this attitude (the Liberal attitude) on a very high level of skill and feeling. The most honest and intelligent adherents to this attitude (like Mr. MacNeice) see themselves as the lost in a changing world. In *Poems* the long, magnificent lament of *An Eclogue for Christmas* is brought to a conclusion by the realization that there is nothing to be done; all the town-dweller and the country-dweller can do is to go on till Doomsday. They perfectly realize that "it is time for some new coinage," but they realize also that *they* are not the new coinage. They are the lost. All they can do is to pretend that the life they appreciate, the life of action and talking, of reading the newspapers, of eating and drinking and seeing

friends, will go on for ever. The highest reach of Mr. MacNeice's poetry is to pretend that it will go on for ever. Near the end of *An Eclogue for Christmas* he says:

A Let the saxophones and the xylophones
And the cult of every technical excellence, the miles of canvas in the galleries
And the canvas of the rich man's yacht snapping and tacking on the seas
And the perfection of a grilled steak—

B Let all these so ephemeral things
Be somehow permanent like the swallow's tangent wings.

He knows that these things are not permanent: today especially they are not permanent. Yet only by pretending that they are permanent is he able to escape, in poetry, from the full realization of their impermanence.

The desperation and hopelessness which finds a compensation in praising what is here now—a grilled steak, a picture or a yacht, things one can see, touch, and even, in one case, eat—is repeated throughout the poems. Sometimes it takes the form of an affirmation of faith in the virtues of Mr. MacNeice as a representative of his class. Sometimes it takes the form of a question—if we can apprehend perfectly, with the greatest tact and sensitiveness, things we see, touch and eat, if we are friendly and generous, if we experience deep physical love,—is not that enough? The affirmation of the importance of the petty bourgeois, or alternatively the dismay of the petty bourgeois, in a society which he dimly or acutely feels to be unfriendly to him and aimed at his destruction, is the open or disguised theme of (in *Poems* alone) *An Eclogue for Christmas*, *Eclogue by a Five-Barred Gate*, *Morning Sun* (in which everything in the streets is alive in the sun, but becomes colorless—dead—when the sun

goes in), *Turf Stacks* ("For we are obsolete who like the lesser things/Who play in corners with looking-glasses and beads"), *The Individualist Speaks*, *Train to Dublin* ("I will not give you any idol or idea, creed or king,/I give you the incidental things which pass/Outwards through space exactly as each was.") What is important occurs *now*, we do not want any nonsense about "tomorrow" or "ideas", *Sunday Morning, Birmingham* (a purely descriptive poem, in which the importance of the people and things described is assumed), *Snow, An April Manifesto* (the devil-may-care mood—"Before the leaves are heavy and the good days vanish/Hold out your glasses which our April must replenish"), *Insidiae, Wolves*, ("Join hands and make believe that joined/Hands will keep away the wolves of water/Who howl along our coast"), *August, Aubade, The Glacier, Museums, Mayfly* and the final *Ode*. The poems I have named make up more than half the book; they are the best poems in the book; and I think they are unsatisfactory poems.

When I say these poems are unsatisfactory, I do not mean they are poorly written; I do not wish to discuss Mr. MacNeice's poems technically, but I think it is indisputable that he writes with care and skill: I mean that they have no moral basis. Mr. MacNeice, who is an intelligent man as well as a skillful poet, knows that the gentle hedonism, a relic of nineteenth-century Liberalism, which is his creed, is bound to disappear in the coming clash of classes. He cannot accept the tenets of Communism or Fascism, yet he is dissatisfied with his present position and his indecision is reflected in his poems. In order to justify this indecision Mr. MacNeice would have to give it a moral basis. he is unable to do so because there is no moral basis for such an attitude. One must be careful nowadays about

using the word "belief": but belief in some external driving force outside himself and his own feelings seems to be what is lacking to make Louis MacNeice a very fine poet. He is wholly self-centred, stuck in a world in which the virtues of the Ordinary Man are the cardinal virtues: generosity, friendliness, physical love.

3.

The political events of the last two years have affected MacNeice keenly: the dilemma in which he is placed as a "man of good will" has become acute: and his long poem, *Autumn Journal*¹, might be called "The Bourgeois's Progress." It was written from August 1938 to the New Year, in the form of a journal—that is, roughly a verse diary, in which the poet put down some of his thoughts and feelings during those months. *Autumn Journal* covers public and private events, the September crisis and MacNeice's own affairs. The poem shows a shift of attitude, a concern with (but still, a detachment from) politics. Politics, indeed, are now everybody's concern; and Mr. MacNeice is concerned with them accordingly. He is amazed, and shocked, that an alien scale of values should threaten his existence:

But posters flapping on the railing tell the fluttered
World that Hitler speaks, that Hitler speaks
And we cannot take it in and we go to our daily
Jobs to the dull refrain of the caption 'War'
Buzzing around us as from hidden insects
And we think 'This must be wrong, it has happened before,
Just like this before, we must be dreaming.'

¹*Autumn Journal*, by Louis MacNeice. Random House, 1939.

Still, we know we are not dreaming. We (the Ordinary Men the poet represents) feel hopeless, and feel guilty:

And the individual, powerless, has to exert the
Powers of will and choice
And choose between enormous evils, either
Of which depends on somebody else's voice.

What can we do? is the question Mr. MacNeice poses to himself indirectly through ninety-six pages. His conclusion (the conclusion of his class) is that we can do nothing: the poem ends with a valediction on the past year—a valediction which is a fine piece of verse, but a manifest evasion of the matter of the poem. Mr. MacNeice blesses everybody:

You, who work for Christ, and you, as eager
For a better life, humanist, atheist,
And you, devoted to a cause, and you, to a family,
Sleep and may your beliefs and zeal persist.

He dreams of "a possible land"

Where nobody sees the use
Of buying money and blood at the cost of blood and money . . .
Where the people are more than a crowd.

And he ends with a dramatic promise to cross the Rubicon—tomorrow.

Sleep to the noise of running water
Tomorrow to be crossed, however deep;
This is no river of the dead or Lethe,
Tonight we sleep
On the banks of Rubicon—the die is cast.

These are admirable sentiments: but they are meaningless, or at best contradictory. If you feel sympathy with both Christian *and* atheist, with the Communist who would destroy the family *and* the bourgeois who would preserve it, you cross no Rubicon

at all. you wish to cross the Rubicon, but in fact you stay just where you are.

The reader may object that he is not concerned with Mr. MacNeice's words or actions, but with his poem. That is true: but on occasion we are bound to question a poet's belief in what he writes, his faith in the values he professes. There is a vagueness and slackness in *Autumn Journal*, which represents a slackness in its author's mind: and this slackness does not make for good writing. It was very well in 1934 to write of "the perfection of a grilled steak": Mr. MacNeice is too honest not to realize that today, for him at least, there can be no writing about grilled steaks when Hitler is on the menu. But his lack of a moral sanction makes it impossible for him to be anything but bewildered and shocked: like the Ordinary Man he is merely appalled by the threatened pestilence from the sky.

We cannot require (or it is useless to require) of a poet that he *should* do this or that: a critic can only point out the probable (poetic) consequences of a given attitude. From *Autumn Journal* we may extract the comfort that its author is fully aware of his own weaknesses and errors. It is impossible to make prophecies: one can only say that if MacNeice is able to cross the Rubicon, if he is able to take the step of adherence to some (not necessarily political) belief objective to himself, that will probably be a good thing for him as a poet; while he remains in his present position, hesitating unhappily on the edge of half-a-dozen Rubicons, he is unlikely to write anything better in the future than he has done in the past.

Julian Symonds

REVIEWS

THE RIMBAUD MYSTERY CLARIFIED

Arthur Rimbaud, by Enid Starkie. W. W. Norton & Company.
Some Poems of Rimbaud, translated by Lionel Abel Exiles' Press.
A Season in Hell, by Arthur Rimbaud. Translated with an
Introduction by Delmore Schwartz. New Directions.

IT MAY now be possible for some one to write an adequate history—or better, critical interpretation—of that movement in French poetry which was retrospectively and loosely called Symbolism. Before the appearance of Miss Starkie's book such a task seemed remote of accomplishment, largely because nobody understood Rimbaud, one of the movement's central figures. Miss Starkie has not achieved anything approaching a final study of Rimbaud's poetry, but she has written what can reasonably be called a definitive biography of the poet, and has supplied a number of missing keys to the poetry itself. In the last decade or so a large amount of new evidence has become available, much of it through her own enterprise. She argues that the existence of any considerable amount of undiscovered material is unlikely. Until this book, however, the "mystery" of Rimbaud was addled as much by biased and fanciful interpretation as by lack of evidence. No less praiseworthy than her scholarship are Miss Starkie's common sense, respect for the rules of probability, and insight into the motives of the extraordinary characters whose story she has told so fascinatingly.

The central problem, of course, is: what caused a French schoolboy, a small-town lad of petty bourgeois stock, to emerge suddenly as a poet of the first order, and of a startlingly original and revolutionary bent? This question is prior to another,

which has received even more attention: What caused him to abandon poetry at the age of nineteen, after four years of writing, for a vagabond life over Europe and the Near East?

If hereditary factors helped to produce Rimbaud's maladjustment and "instability," these are shown to have come from the mother's side rather than from the father's as generally supposed. Captain Rimbaud was a sufficiently normal individual who worked up from the ranks and acquired a reputation as a sound colonial administrator. His separation from Mme. Rimbaud resulted from an amply grounded recognition of their incompatibility. Both of Arthur's maternal uncles, on the other hand, were wild men, and one of them lived as a tramp from his early twenties till his death at the age of ninety-four. Mme. Rimbaud's severe discipline of her children, Miss Starkie infers, sprang in large part from her desire to save them from like propensities. She devoted all her efforts to placing and keeping them on that path to respectability, a thorough education. A long essay which Arthur wrote at the age of seven shows both a precocious literary talent and a critical attitude toward the large doses of history, geography, Latin and Greek with which he was crammed. Yet he complied, concealing his inner rebellion, and acquired not only a large collection of the cardboard laurel wreaths with which the French educational system rewards its prize winners, but also a knowledge of the classics which was later to serve him well.

The boy's first real stimulus to the literary life came through his association with a new teacher, Georges Izambard, a young man with radical political ideas and a good library of pre-classical and contemporary French writers. Rimbaud soon assimilated the style of the Parnassians, and within a few months passed on

to more original work—political poems and realistic sketches of the provincial life about him. His newly discovered gifts, together with the general unsettlement caused by the Franco-Prussian War, brought his rebellion to a head, and he made fugues in search of literary material. On one of these, according to his schoolboy friend Delahaye, he was raped by soldiers in whose barracks he spent a night during a trip to Paris. This brutal experience, recounted obliquely in the poem *Cœur Supplicié*, produced in the sixteen year old boy a psychic upheaval beside which his earlier revolt was mild. It embittered Rimbaud and completed his demoralization, making of him a confirmed little bum; at the same time it supplied the shock which was to overthrow the accepted canons of French poetry.

This trauma coincided with his discovery of occultist doctrines, of which he picked up a smattering from a variety of sources: from his Charleville friend Charles Bretagne, from Baudelaire, from the esoteric "philosopher" Ballanche, and from articles on the subject which were then appearing frequently in the literary journals. Rimbaud began to write poems unprecedented in their brilliance and violence of metaphor. For a while he continued to write mainly about the political situation and the people of his home town; gradually, however, he forsook realism of subject-matter, as he had already broken away from conventional techniques. The theory of poetry which he elaborated in the *Lettres du Voyant* was embodied in such works as *Bateau Ivre* and the prose poems of *Les Illuminations*. By the "prolonged, unlimited and methodical disorganization of all the senses" (*long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens*), Rimbaud sought to penetrate the veil of the "unknown," the "ineffable"; and the poem was to be at the same time a

revelation of the supernal world of occultist mysticism and a prophecy of the new order which was some day to be realized on earth.

Perhaps Miss Starkie overstates her case when she goes on to argue that Rimbaud believed he had become God. It is hazardous to take literally Verlaine's characterization of him in the poem *Crimen Amoris*, for Rimbaud's exaltation does not seem to have gone to the point of advanced paranoia. In any case, if Rimbaud did convince the credulous Verlaine that he believed in his apotheosis, this can be explained with equal plausibility as one of the cruel and fantastic practical jokes with which Rimbaud loved to terrorize his "foolish virgin." Miss Starkie's own evidence does not justify a further conclusion than that Rimbaud believed that he was, in the strong sense of the word, "inspired," that his mind was "illuminated" by the divine mind. Such a status is, furthermore, the most that his occultist sources claimed for the poet.

A Season in Hell, Rimbaud's last work, is taken by his biographer to be a recantation of his mystical doctrines, and a repudiation, somewhat vacillating it is true, of both his moral attitude and his poetry up to that time. She makes it clear, however, in opposition to some of Rimbaud's interpreters, that he did not then renounce poetry in general; on the contrary he planned to write a series of poems in a more traditional manner. His final abandonment of literature is shown to have been as much the result of his disappointment with the cold reception given to *A Season in Hell* as of his deflated notion of the poet's status. The story of Rimbaud's wanderings over Europe, his self-immolation in Abyssinia — where Miss Starkie proves that he not only was a gun-runner but trafficked in slaves — and his

pitiful return to France to die, is told with skill and documentation, but is tangential to the poetry.

Miss Starkie's discussion of the poems is devoted largely to supplying a prose orientation of them, a necessary labor which became possible only when she had clarified Rimbaud's poetic theory and his literary, intellectual, and personal influences. The critics can now set to work to analyze his technique and evaluate his accomplishment generally. Rimbaud's most important contributions to modern poetry may not lie, as Miss Starkie suggests, in those writings which most fully exemplify his theory of the poet as visionary. It is arguable that the poems immediately preceding these, the poems of what may be called his transitional period, are equally original and ultimately of greater value. In these Rimbaud, in company with Baudelaire, freed French poetry from the pretty romantic classicism of the time, taught it to penetrate the hidden recesses of the mind, and used it to reveal the whole psyche, with its burden of the tabooed, the horrible, the anxious, the fanciful, the ambivalent. Only the Elizabethans and the English metaphysicals, perhaps, had presented experience with such volume and density. This is true even of comparatively early works such as *Les Assis*, *Les Pauvres à l'Eglise*, and *Les Premières Communions*, in which Rimbaud set down a sensitive adolescent's frank appraisal of the life that he knew. There was much hate behind these poems, but I cannot accept the judgment that they suffer from an excess of personal emotion: Rimbaud was seized by his theme and attained both a psychological penetration and an objectivity of the imagination which lend dignity, pathos, and truth to the mordant satire. The disorganization of his senses had not become complete in these poems; what he had done was to break up the conventional and

mechanized modes of perception in order to substitute more direct, subtle and veracious ones. In *Bateau Ivre* and many of the verse poems of *Les Illuminations*, such as the great *Michel et Christine*, the poet had abandoned the order of sense-perception, but retained at least an equivalent of it in an imaginative order with a similar structure.

His visionary phase — represented in its most extreme form by the prose poems of *Les Illuminations* — has perhaps been over-praised both by his French admirers and by Miss Starkie. In these poems there is neither perceptual nor imaginative order. Recourse to occultist symbolism is at best a desperate method of achieving structure, and Rimbaud's grasp of it was superficial compared with that of Blake or Yeats: with all his genius, these poems show the immaturity of the half-educated boy. As he himself came to recognize in *A Season in Hell*—itself scarcely more coherent — what he had expressed in these poems was not a supernal order but merely his own emotional state. Now this might well seem a greater achievement to Frenchmen than to Anglo-Saxons, since French poetry for several centuries preceding the Symbolists had been notoriously poor in feeling as compared with English. Yet in poetry there is a paradox similar to the "hedonistic paradox" in ethics: the more you seek emotion in its pure rarefied state, the less likely you are to achieve it. Poetry has a more sustained, developed, and compelling emotional effect when the feeling inheres in an object — largely imaginary, it may be, but paralleling or simulating the structure of the real — created by the imagery. Rimbaud is partly responsible for the loose emotionalism, with its fetish of "pure poetry," which Symbolism released among the lesser adherents of the cult and bequeathed to our own day; his valid achievement,

together with the other Symbolist masters, lay rather in his extension of poetry to include a wider domain of experience, his creative use of metaphor, his occasional undergirding of emotion by a firm imaginative construction.

The two books of translations which have just appeared testify to the renewed acknowledgment of Rimbaud's importance; only Mr. Abel's, however, will aid the would-be reader who has little or no French. Although Mr. Abel's French is uncertain in a few places, his free versions of twenty poems convey a good impression of Rimbaud's use of metaphor and sometimes succeed in suggesting his complex music. From a writer of Mr. Schwartz's ability good things might have been expected. He has unfortunately neglected to acquire the rudiments of the French language, and he often prefers to guess at the meanings of words rather than take the elementary precaution of consulting the dictionary. A note tells us that the translation was made five years ago—when Mr. Schwartz was a very young man; it evidently was not revised before publication. Justice to all concerned, including Rimbaud, would seem to require that it be withdrawn from circulation at once.

Philip Blair Rice

A DRAMATIC GIFT

The White Stranger, by Kimball Flaccus. Scribner's.

The integrity of expression which marked Kimball Flaccus's first volume, *Avalanche of April*, is likewise characteristic of *The White Stranger*. Whether his themes are subjective or objective, they are motivated by passion and modeled with an eye and ear to an ideal form. Just this side of thirty, Flaccus is not

the prolific writer that most of his contemporaries are, and reveals more critical judgment in what he chooses to print or to lay aside. The result is that the young Philadelphian has never issued a bad or a careless poem. He has a deeper concern with the effects of writing than most of his fellows have: the reader isn't treated like an addict of cross-word puzzles, nor, per contra, like a dummy who needs an obvious appeal. These poems are clear at the very first reading and are deep and rich enough to reward further reading.

The book is in two parts: *Quetzalcoatl*, a verse play in three short acts, and a group of varied poems. Nature and the people of nature are set to athletic lines without being exposed to the literary he-manism of our time. Woman, love, sex and the like are treated with precision, and not as though they were being discovered by one man alone. There is no escapist adoration of death: death is accepted calmly:

Death would involve disaster, black and deep,
Did not the mind assure us that dissolution
Crumbles the body, wakes the soul from sleep.

The world may be "in a chassis," as Jockser observes in *Juno and the Paycock*, and this chaos is limned by Flaccus in a truly outstanding poem, *The Voice From Beyond*. The attack on a war-ridden race is made in the first person singular, and with a host of evolutionary images clean and realistic. If men are determined on self-destruction—

No human dissolution troubles me,
Ignoring loathsome evil, matchless grace,
I wash the spheres in planetary space
As rocks are cleaned and rounded by the sea.

And if men do not heed their creator, "It is enough that they have heard my warning."

This poem reveals a dramatic gift that is not so completely successful in the actual drama, *Quetzalcoatl*. As a poem to be read, a work to be staged in the imagination, it has force and conflict, a natural eloquence, and a sequence of powerful events culminating in the victory of the powers of evil over the good, of dark races over the White Stranger, of war over peace. Aware of this downward tendency and of the legendary Quetzalcoatl's place in the American tradition both North and South, Flaccus appended an epilogue in which the antiphonal choruses of the Greek theatre are handled with telling effect. But the effect is outside the planes of the actual drama: it relies on optimistic prophecy rather than dramatic development and is a forced conclusion to an otherwise moving composition.

The revival of poetic drama in modern terms has received encouraging impetus from Eliot and MacLeish, Auden and Isherwood, and more recently from Delmore Schwartz and Kimball Flaccus. But our poets are not yet rude enough for the bare boards of the stage. They haven't overcome temptations of philosophizing, rather than thoroughly dramatizing a given plot. What they need most of all is a practical workshop in which the imagination can labor naturally and without any personal strain. Such a theatre, far from being exclusive, as the commercial theatre is, would open its doors to fellows like Kimball Flaccus. Then we should find at long last that our palaver about democracy and the communal way is questioned and answered on the downright boards and impersonal walls of the theatre. Poetic drama, as the ancients discovered, is common to the best in all people and employs their greatest energies in a common sphere.

Alfred Kreymborg

This Is Our Own, by Marie de L. Welch. The Macmillan Co.

It seems to have been California's fate to receive violent publicity, and some of her best known writers, like Jeffers and Steinbeck, have added their own strong colors to the somewhat sensational picture of the Golden State that was already forming in the imaginations of people at a distance. Those who read Miss Welch's new book will discover a different, a tenderer and more liveable California, one that may be encompassed within the range of a lyric talent which at its best has a unique quality among contemporary poets.

Nature as perceived in these poems has its conflicts, man in relation to it is by no means entirely at peace, and there is pitying awareness of the guilty and tragic war of man against man; but having a courage or else an innate vitality uncommon today, Miss Welch is able to regard our explosive world with an affirmation that is no more facile than much current pessimism. Her sequence of poems *To the Unborn* is the best expression of this attitude.

The present volume is composed of fifty-five separately titled poems, all but two of which — *Camp Corcoran* and *To the Unborn* — are quite short, but after the first as well as subsequent readings I found myself thinking of the book as a single poem. There is a poetically logical progression of thought and feeling that gives integration. The magical quality of many of these poems about the earth, wild life, the seasons should confound those who have complained that the substitution of a philosophically materialistic for a religious conception of nature would cause poetry to lose its charm. One of the special values

of this volume, at least for the present reviewer, is that the poet sees her own kind as merely a bolder and more complex design in the splendid pattern of life — newt and frog, mole and doe and man composed of the same elements:

I say man is not less because he moves
By laws that move the spider's littleness . . .

In the preoccupation with subjects familiar and close at hand, there is a suggestion of kinship with Robert Frost, as in the reticence and restraint of the style and the deceptive simplicity of approach that often conceals the kind of condensed wisdom good poetry can yield. Take the poem for Spain called *They Destroy the Monuments* — the last three lines:

Grieve for destruction, but not as of this hour.
Long before the actual image was broken
It had been hollowed out, it broke like a shell.

Miss Welch has found a personal way of using accepted forms and giving them a music and an idiom of her own, as in the fine love poem, *Pattern of Awakening*:

Now the young buck beareth a delicate query
With the budding of his horns; the young buck walketh
Like a leaf, like a hunting owl, velvet, wary;
And knoweth in a dream only what he stalketh.
The wood is a pattern of wakening although
The brook fades and the dry ferns stir,
For, bearing a delicate answer, the young doe
As in a dream, seeketh the questioner.

All who have had the pleasure of knowing this writer's way with poems about animals will turn with delight to *Orgy* (where the rabbits get drunk on new spinach), to *Gopher and Mole*, and *Love to Ancestors*. These pieces about wild creatures are among the most successful.

As the earlier parts of the volume deal with the world as humanity finds it, the final section has the more difficult task of

transmuting into poetic terms the world mankind is making.

This is a lovely world and offers
All loveliness

the poet affirms in the poem which gives title to the book; but she compels herself to see that there is also unimaginable ugliness, exploitation, a humanity depraved and debauched. These too must be seen and known. We feel that the poet is telling herself rather than us. She is less effective in turning this material into poetry. Nevertheless, *The Nomad Harvesters*, *Camp Corcoran*, and *Harvests* make mature statements and have deservedly been much quoted. *This Is Our Own*, in its special way and for its special audience, may join Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* in helping to make exploitation intolerable in a state where it is no longer inevitable. In her challenge *To the Explorers* to press on to the dangerous spiritual frontiers, Miss Welch justly says:

Peace is a country yet unknown, and Plenty
Has been discovered, but is not yet charted.

Straightforward and unobscure, but written with full awareness of poetic discipline, there are poems in this book that people will learn to say, and teach to their children.

Elsa Gidlow

DIRECT POEMS

Poems, by Alvin Foote. Caxton Printers, Ltd.

Almost nobody appears to have noticed that this first book of *Poems* by Alvin Foote assembles work more mature, individual and efficient than that of most young American poets. Indeed, Foote seems to me to be doing easily and naturally what many a poet with louder report is merely striving for: that his assimila-

tion of contemporary American image, world economic unbalance and world-threatened war has been accomplished as it were all by himself, and without the name-calling, the exhortation, the grinding of experiment and convention in technique, and the almighty self-conscious righteousness that have characterized so much of social-conscious verse.

There is a directness, a very fresh one, between Foote and his material. It is simply: that he has seen a bum turned away at a fine kitchen door by a housewife ("Whence comes her pride?"); watched American Legionnaires marching in 1938 ("remnants of dead men"); has thought about "conquest" of man and man, about change in the world and in his own confusion, about elusive happiness in street and canyon. So when he remarks

Time we entrench at last,
Attack from a hollow ditch.

it is in fact a remark, cohesive with what he has said in understatement and almost matter-of-fact description.

His aim is very often condensation and though his style suffers from occasional raggedness it is stiffened throughout by a telegraphic language. His poems, dry and imageless though they look on the surface, usually move with a quickening imagination that leaps between relationships unconventionally. One goes back to try again to follow him, nearly always with reward. This means, I think, the appearance of a particular point of view, a new angle developing. There are neither the customary derivations nor the snobbery of "difference." I believe it is the real, self-sustaining difference of poetry as felt and revealed through a mind capable of poetry.

Winfield Townley Scott

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

To the Editor:

In 1936 Harriet Monroe, shortly before her death, accepted two poems of mine for publication in *POETRY*. They appeared a year later, and I can say quite truthfully that I was very proud. That publication gave me strength; coming at a time when my writing was regarded with indulgence it justified me, and I settled down to production with a confidence that I had not felt before. But however I thought my poems improved, editors of *POETRY* did not, and though they are certainly better qualified to judge than I, I could not help being puzzled by the consistent stream of material entering the magazine on no other discernible grounds than that it dealt with the class struggle. Last summer I sent you a group of the best poems I had yet done; they were returned with only the formal printed slip. In anger and humiliation I sat down and scrawled a facetious, hurried scrap with a social message, concocted a fantastic letter, signed it as "William Herber," and sent it in. I immediately regretted the act as one beneath the dignity of any poet worthy of the name, and I relied upon your good judgment to keep the verse out of print. I should not have been so sanguine. You published it, bold as brass, in all its mawkish and heavy proletarianism [in *POETRY* for February 1940].

Even then the incident would soon have been forgotten if I had kept it to myself. Unfortunately, I told my friends; seeing a beautiful opportunity for sport they urged me to continue the hoax. I am ashamed to say I let myself be persuaded, though I insisted on a compromise: I would have Herber dead and so end the affair. My friends received your touching acceptance with great glee. They saw immediately the possibilities of the situation. Young genius killed under a freight train. (And certainly one dead poet is worth a dozen live ones.) Gradually more poems are found. A book is produced. Biographies appear. Tears are shed lamenting the untimely death. A legend springs up. All the slobbering sentimentality of the literary tapeworms is evoked.

However, I take my role as a poet and my integrity as an individual too seriously to become further involved. The sending of that second poem is one of the really contemptible acts of my life. I mailed the first in anger, and it served its purpose. It showed me all I wanted to know about you. I sent the second in meanness, deliberately debased myself, deliberately joined the host of panders and double-jointed pimps that make the age what it is. I am writing this letter as a sort of substitute for your missing critical taste. It is a scathing comment on the standards of the time that poets must beg editors to save them from their own indiscretions.

For condemnation of me in no way absolves you. Whatever reper-

cussions the incident is liable to gather, you most fully deserve. As editor of the one journal upon which American poets heavily lean, at a time when poetic expression needs the most rigorous preservation of its ideals, to let yourself be swayed by this extraneous political mess speaks eloquently for itself.

I shall continue to subscribe, for your prose department somewhat escapes the jamming of the editorial mind, and nowhere else is current poetry reviewed with any enthusiasm. But however I come later to regret the arrogance and the presumption of this letter, I say now that it is becoming more and more apparent that POETRY died with its founder.

William Everson

[We still think the poem signed "William Herber" the best we have seen by Mr. Everson. It is certainly true in his case, as in the case of so many poets today, that "l'indignation fait les vers." And if a few rejection slips are all he needs to get going, that is easy.—ED]

NEWS NOTES

A LONG POEM by T. S. Eliot, *East Coker*, has appeared in *The New English Weekly* for March 21st. It is about 200 lines, partly in free verse, partly in rhyme. In spite of a powerful and rather blood-curdling statement of religious belief (Part IV), the poem as a whole seems written in the quietly desperate mood of Eliot's earlier poetry. One of the most interesting passages is that in which the author comments on himself as a poet:

"So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*—
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate—but there is no competition—
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost

And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business."

We are glad to hear that the poem will be published in this country by the *Partisan Review*, in its May-June issue.

Fellowships have been awarded by the Guggenheim Foundation to two poets. They are Delmore Schwartz, of Cambridge, Mass., and Lloyd Frankenberg, of New York City.

The Shelley Memorial Award has been divided between Winfield Townley Scott, of Providence, R. I., and Herbert Bruncken, of Milwaukee, Wis. This award carries about \$800 and is given annually to young poets on the basis of work published, a committee of judges being appointed each year by the estate of Mary P. Sears, of Boston, who endowed the prize.

An enjoyable article about Edgar Lee Masters, *Spoon River Twenty-five Years After*, by A. M. Sullivan, appeared in the April issue of *Dun's Review*. There are some good illustrations and some interesting facts about Masters. For instance: "He spends many of his working hours in personal correspondence with apprentice writers, offering a word of praise and caution. Painfully candid in stating his dislikes, his laconic word of approval is supported by a genuine enthusiasm. He makes no courteous concessions, not even to his intimates"

Mr. Masters, we hear, recently put a number of his original book manuscripts on the market, but has already declined a handsome offer for some of these because he hopes they will be purchased by an individual or institution in the Middle West. He said: "I would be glad if these manuscripts were bought and deposited in Chicago or Illinois," adding that he would like to be able to present them to some library in that region, but cannot afford to do so. They include the hand-written first drafts of *The New Spoon River* and *The New World*, and corrected typescripts of the Lindsay and Whitman books.

A Poets' Placement Committee, consisting of Amy Bonner, Henry Seidel Canby, Carter Davidson, George Dillon, James E. Fravell, Glenn Hughes, Henry Goddard Leach, and Gerald Sanders, has been meeting with success in its effort to bring to the attention of college and university officials the availability of outstanding poets and other men of letters as lecturers, visiting or resident professors, and the like. The committee feels that there are hundreds of colleges in America which would enjoy the sort of association with a local poet that Harvard, for instance, enjoys in its relation with Robert Frost. Many colleges have no means of getting in touch with candidates, or of knowing which poets are available, and many poets who would gladly accept such positions, at fees which most college budgets could easily meet, hesitate to approach college authorities themselves and suggest their availability. The committee

welcomes all inquiries from institutions interested in learning what poets are available, and their fees. Correspondence with the committee will not be passed on to individual poets, except at the request of institutions when a suitable candidate has been found for consideration. The attempt will be to meet budget requirements in finding suitable incumbents for positions. Poets who are available for such work are requested to "register." No fees will be charged for any service which the committee renders; it has no money to operate on, and therefore cannot promise to answer or acknowledge any communication. However, all correspondence will be kept strictly confidential, and applicants will be notified whenever a likely position offers. Letters should be addressed to Mr. Fravell, at 60 Fifth Avenue, New York, or to Professor Sanders, care of Michigan State Normal College, Ypsilanti, Mich.

Ralph Hodgson and Edward Davison will direct the poetry department of the University of Colorado Writers' Conference at Boulder, Colo., from July 22nd to August 9th. The Manuscript Bureau will be open July 8th for preliminary reading. Peter De Vries will return for two weeks to the Nahma Vacation School, to be held August 11th to 24th at Nahma, Mich., a lumbering village in the Upper Peninsula, where he will have charge of the poetry group.

Literary editors of newspapers occasionally review the contents of POETRY as they do books—sometimes an issue, sometimes several issues at a time. And now John Holmes, of the *Boston Transcript*, has started a series of regular notices which will cover a full year of publication, and promises to bestow a "blue ribbon award" for what he considers the best poems in each issue. Our readers will find it of interest to compare their preferences with Mr. Holmes's monthly accolade.

Beginning with the May issue, the Monthly Editorial Letter of Fortuny's Book Discussion Club will publish contributions of poetry. Poems should not be longer than 32 lines, and should be accompanied by return postage. Payment will be made upon acceptance at 20c per line. Address the Editor, Monthly Editorial Letter, Fortuny's Book-Discussion Club, 67 West 44th Street, New York City.

The spring issue of *The Phoenix*, published at Woodstock, N. Y., features some *Excerpts From D. H. Lawrence's War Letters*, together with contributions from Jean Giono, Anais Nin, D. S. Savage, and others. This magazine is waging a pacifist campaign, and is supporting the conscientious objectors in England and the War Resisters League in this country. The editor is James Peter Cooney.

Edwin Markham's library, containing 15,000 volumes of poetry, criticism, and religious works, has been left to Wagner College, Staten Island. On April 23rd a memorial dinner was given in honor of Markham at the Advertising Club in New York. The speakers were Judson King, Ridgely Torrence, and Dr. Francis Harvey Green.

Eight cash prizes totaling one hundred dollars are offered in a contest closing July 31st by the Carter Publishing Company, 542 Fifth Avenue, New York City. Poetry of any form or length is eligible and there is no limit to the number of entries. Winning poems will be published in an anthology.

New Directions, of Norfolk, Conn., is planning to publish a series of twelve monthly poetry pamphlets, beginning in January 1941, to be sold at a subscription price of three dollars. James Laughlin, the editor, offers a prize of \$25 for the best name for the series: "Send your entries on a card, as many as you like. The contest will close May 25th." He would also like suggestions as to what poets, especially young unknown poets, should be included. "Each pamphlet will be the work of a creative printer—men like Peter Beilenson of the Peter Pauper Press, Edmund Thompson of Hawthorn House, or Carroll Coleman of the Prairie Press. We want to make the series a landmark of fine printing as well as fine poetry."

In the contributors' notes last month we made Howard Blake seven years older than he actually is. He was born in 1914, not 1907. And *Calendar*, the YMHA Poetry Center anthology, will be published this month by James A. Decker's Village Press, of Prairie City, Ill., not, as we said in the April issue, by the Prairie Press, which is located at Muscatine, Iowa.

It will be good news to readers in the Chicago area that Carl Sandburg has been scheduled to give a series of six public lectures this month at the University of Chicago. The dates and topics are as follows: May 2nd, "Romanticism and Realism in American Literature"; May 7th, "American Tall Tales"; May 9th, "The Songbag"; May 14th, 16th, and 21st, three lectures on Lincoln. This series, which has been made possible by the Walgreen Foundation for the Study of American Institutions, will be held in the evenings at 8:30, in Mandel Hall, 57th Street and University Avenue.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

LOUIS MACNEICE is one of the leading contemporary poets. He was born in Belfast in 1907 (his family, however, came from the West of Ireland), was educated at Oxford, and has been a Lecturer for several years at the University of London. Six of his books have been published in this country: *Poems*, *Out of the Picture* (a play in verse), *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus* (translation), *Letters From Iceland* (written in collaboration with W. H. Auden), *Modern Poetry: A Personal Essay*,

and the recent long poem, *Autumn Journal*. Since February he has been lecturing in the United States and is now resident in Ithaca, N. Y., where he is teaching for the current semester at Cornell.

KENNETH FEARING, the well-known American poet, has been a contributor since 1927 and is the author of three books of verse, *Angel Arms* (1929), *Poems* (1935), and *Dead Reckoning* (1938). He lives in New York.

LIONEL ABEL is a young New York poet now living in Chicago. He has contributed verse and criticism to *The Nation*, *Partisan Review*, *New Letters in America*, etc., and is the author of a recent book of translations, *Some Poems of Rimbaud*, published by the Exiles' Press. This is his first appearance in POETRY.

BABETTE DEUTSCH, of New York, is the author of several books of verse and criticism, including the recent collection of poems, *One Part Love*.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, of Rutherford, N. J., has been a contributor since 1913. He was awarded the Dial Prize in 1926 and is the author of many books of verse and prose. His *Collected Poems* were published in 1938 by New Directions.

WELDON KES, of Denver, Colo., was introduced to our readers in 1938, and has contributed also to *New Directions*, *The Kenyon Review*, etc. He is on the staff of the Denver Public Library.

THEODORE ROETHKE contributes poems and criticism to *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, POETRY, etc. He teaches at the Pennsylvania State College.

HARRY ROSKOLENKO, of New York, is the author of a recent book of poems, *Sequence on Violence*.

DONAGH MACDONAGH is a young Irish poet, son of Thomas MacDonagh, one of the leaders of the 1916 Insurrection. His work has appeared in *The Critteron*, POETRY, etc.

This month's prose contributors have all appeared previously:

JULIAN SYMONS, of London, is the editor of *Twentieth Century Verse* and the author of a book of poems, *Confusions About X*. PHILIP BLAIR RICE is on the faculty of Kenyon College and an editor of *The Kenyon Review*. ALFRED KREYMBORG, of New York, is the author of many books, the most recent being *The Four Apes and Other Fables*. ELSA GIDLOW, of San Francisco, has contributed often to POETRY and is the author of two books of poems, *On a Grey Thread* and *From Alba Hill*. WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT, of Providence, R. I., is the author of a book of poems, *Biography for Traman*. WILLIAM EVERSON is a young poet of Selma, Calif. He attended Fresno State College and has served two enlistments in the CCC. A book of his poems, *San Joaquin*, was published last year by the Ward Ritchie Press.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE

- Song in the Meadow*, by Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Viking Press.
The Man Coming Toward You, by Oscar Williams. Oxford University Press.
The Spirit Watches, by Ruth Pitter. Macmillan Co.
Against the Sun, by Ada Jackson. Macmillan Co.
Planets and Angels, by Eugene Jolas. English Club of Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Ia.
Letter from Ireland, by Ewart Milne. Gayfield Press, Dublin, Ireland.
Orange Feather, by Isabel Fiske Conant. Bruce Humphries.
No Final Breath, by Grace Buchanan Sherwood. Wings Press, Mill Valley, Calif.
City Pastorals, by Jacob Hauser. Priv. ptd., San Benito, Texas.
The Wending Year, by Claude T. Barnes. Priv. ptd., Salt Lake City.
Fire of Life, by Edward McCaughy. Crusader Press, Prairie City, Ill.
Gods of Dusk, by Jay Roderic De Spain. Fortuny's, New York City.
Deep Waters, by J. P. Gimenez. Padilla Printing Works, San Juan, Puerto Rico.
Twenty Nine Poems, by Craddock Edmunds. Priv. ptd., Halifax, Va.
War. 1939, by Robert Goldsborough. Priv. ptd., New York City.
Carousel, by Wayne Weatherly, Martin Corbo, Daniel Fabrizio. Priv. ptd., Newark, N. J.
The Crystal Loom, by Blanche D. Sampson. Unity Press, Holyoke, Mass.
Sounding Piquant Verses, by Eleanor Vinton. Falmouth Pub. House, Portland, Me.
Crucero Lirico, by Providencia Riancho. Priv. ptd., San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- ### PROSE AND ANTHOLOGIES
- Directions in Modern Poetry*, by Elizabeth Drew. W. W. Norton & Co.
Ronsard, Prince of Poets, by Morris Bishop. Oxford Univ. Press.
The Road to Tryermaine, by Arthur H. Nethercot. Univ. of Chicago Press.
The Face of Truth, by Dallas Kenmare. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford, England.
Hutton Street, by Robert Lowry. The Little Man, Cincinnati, O.
Pip Pap Po, A Book of Many Things. The Little Man.
Little Alvin's Story Book, by Alvin Frederick Levin. The Little Man.
Word Ancestry, by Willis A. Ellis. American Classical League, New York City.
The Rime Machine, by Arthur Blanchard. Priv. ptd., Cambridge, Mass.
Signets, An Anthology of Beginnings, edited by Sheila Corley and Frederick Brantley. Alan Swallow, Baton Rouge, La.
Poètes Contemporains. Collection des Amitiés Françaises. Firmin-Didot et Cie, Paris.

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The Cultural Front, a new department of comment by JAMES T. FARRELL

The Integral Humanism of Jacques Maritain, an essay on the new Catholic movement among the intellectuals by SIDNEY HOOK

Poetry, reviews by David Daiches, Louise Bogan, and Babette Deutsch.

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**EXCERPT FROM A FEATURE ARTICLE BY JAMES GRAY
IN HIS COLUMN IN THE ST. PAUL DISPATCH,
FEBRUARY 8, 1940**

CONSIDER, for a moment, how infinitely poorer American literature might very well have been if POETRY had not existed. In its pages appeared first the work of Vachel Lindsay. Circumstance beat Lindsay to his knees in the end and he made his exit from life a suicide, maddened by the need of a few dollars. If it had not been for POETRY that moment of despair might have come before Lindsay ever got started. POETRY gave him his voice and his audience. It wooed him on to the exercise of his extraordinary gift.

POETRY was damned mercilessly by the editor of *The Dial* for printing an "effusion" which was called an "impudent affront to the poetry-loving public." That effusion was Sandburg's "Chicago." Suppose POETRY had not printed it. Sandburg might have gone on indefinitely writing movie reviews for the *Chicago Daily News* or he might have taken to tramping the earth again, saying to hell with literature.

There were great epic rows over the work of Ezra Pound and D. H. Lawrence and John Gould Fletcher. But POETRY kept on printing them resolutely until the world had begun to accept them as poets of distinction and importance.

In quieter moments, POETRY persuaded Rabindranath Tagore to translate his work for the first time into English. The talents over which people quarreled and those which they accepted readily all were welcome if only they were genuine talents. . . . And now POETRY needs help. It needs to speak to everyone who has valued its service during the past 30 years and who would like to have an opportunity to say: "Carry on!" There is of course only one way of offering that encouragement. It is to send in a subscription to the headquarters of the magazine at 232 East Erie Street, Chicago. . . . We live in a moment when a sane society should be particularly jealous of the preservation of its culture. POETRY has had a very great share in maturing America's taste. It cannot now be spared.

POETRY *for June* 1940



| | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----|
| The Soul and Body of John Brown | MURIEL RUKEYSER | 115 |
| Four Poems | EDOUARD RODITI | 121 |
| The Political Prisoner—John Lack-Land—London by Moonlight—Amare Est Amarum | | |
| Two Poems | ARTHUR KRAMER | 124 |
| Victory—Vampire | | |
| The Realists | JEAN STARR UNTERMAYER | 127 |
| Guernica | JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY | 128 |
| Two Poems I-II | NICHOLAS MOORE | 130 |
| Holiday | E. DOREEN IDLE | 131 |
| Ventriloquist: The Coffee Hour | MARGUERITE YOUNG | 132 |
| Peeling Apples | HELENE S. PULS | 134 |
| Anabasis I-III | YVONNE MARKUS | 135 |
| Three Poems | ROBERT LIDDELL LOWE | 136 |
| Sir Isaac Newton—An Old Man Talking in His Sleep— The Liable Tree | | |
| Two Poems | JAMES DALY | 138 |
| A. D. 1940: An Epigraph—Franchester Farm | | |
| From "Poem in Construction" | RICHARD EBERHART | 140 |
| The Poetry of A. E. Housman | JOHN PEALE BISHOP | 144 |
| When Children Write Verse | MAUD SUMNER SMITH | 154 |
| Reviews: | | |
| A Rocking Alphabet | CONRAD AIKEN | 159 |
| The Last Tourist | S. I. HAYAKAWA | 161 |
| The Military Image | DAVID SACHS | 164 |
| Seventeenth Century Yankee | HOWARD BLAKE | 165 |
| News Notes | | 169 |
| Notes on Contributors | | 171 |
| Books Received | | 172 |

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P O E T R Y

A M A G A Z I N E O F V E R S E

VOL. LVI

NO. III

J U N E 1 9 4 0

THE SOUL AND BODY OF JOHN BROWN

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!

Joel, IV, 14

HIS LIFE is in the body of the living.
When they hanged him the first time, his image leaped
into the blackened air. His grave was the floating faces
of the crowd, and he refused them in release,
rose open-eyed to autumn, a fanatic
beacon of fierceness leaping to meet them there,
match the white prophets of the storm,
the streaming meteors of the war.

Dreaming Ezekiel, threaten me alive!

Scissors! Why don't you rip up that guitar?
Or must we listen to those blistering strings?

The trial of heroes follows their execution. The striding
wind of western nations carried new rain, new lightning,
destroyed in magnificence with noon shining straight down,
swaying the fiery pines. He wanted freedom. Could not himself
be free

until more grace reached a corroded world. Our guilt his own.
Under the cloak of the century drops the trap—

There! tall in October's fruition-fire stand
three images of himself, one as he stood on the ground,
one as he stood on sudden air, the third
receding to our fatal topmost hills
faded through dying altitudes, and low
through faces living under the dregs of the air,
deprived childhood and thwarted youth and change:

fantastic sweetness gone to rags
and incorruptible anger blurred by age.

Compel the steps of lovers, watch them lie silvery
attractive in naked embrace over the brilliant gorge,
and open them to love: enlarge their welcome
to sharp-faced countrysides, vicious familiar windows
where lopped-off worlds say *I am promise*, holding
the stopgap slogans of a thin season offering only
the false initials, blind address, dummy name—
enemies who reply in smiles, mild slavers, moderate whores.
—There is a gorge to remember, where the soldiers came
in a terrible answer of lechery after death.
—He said at last, with a living perfect look,
"I designed to have done the same thing again
on a larger scale." Sleepless, he sees his tree

grow in the land, a wish to leap these mountains.
They are not mountains, but men and women sleeping.

O my scene! my mother!
America who offers many births.

Over the tiers of barriers, compel the steps of armies
who will arrive with horizon sharpness rising
in quick embrace toward the people who greet them, love
faltering in our hills among the symptoms of ice,
small lights of the shifting winter, the rapid snow-blue stars.
This must be done by armies. Nothing is free. He knows
direct attacks, refuses to speak again,
 "If I tell them the truth,
 they will say I speak in symbols."

White rhetoric of landscapes gives him his nakedness
reflected in counties of naked who shiver and stare at fires,
their backs to the face that unrolls new worlds around them.
They go down the valleys. They shamble in the streets.
Blind to the sun-storming image echoed in their eyes.
They dread the surface of their victim life,
lying helpless and savage in shade parks,
 asking the towers only what beggars dare:
 food, fire, water, and air.

Spring: the great hieroglyph: the mighty, whose first hour
collects the winter invalids, whose cloudless
pastures train swarms of mutable apple-trees
to blond delusions of light, the touch of whiter
more memorable breasts each evening, the resistant
male shoulders riding under sold terrible eyes.

The soldier-face persists, the victorious head
kissing those breasts asks for more miracles—
Untarnished hair! Set them free! "Without the snap of a gun—"
More failures—but the season is a garden after sickness;

Then the song begins,
"The clearing of the sky
brings fulness to heroes—
Call Death out of the city
and ring the summer in."

Whether they sleep alone. Whether they understand darkness
of mine or tunnel or store. Whether they lay branches
with Western skill to entice their visions out of fire.
Whether she lie awake, whether he walk in guilt
down silenced corridors, leaving no fingerprints.
Whether he weaken searching for power in pamphlets,
or shut out every fantasy but the fragile eyelid to
commemorate delight. . . .
They believe in their dreams.

They more and more, secretly, tell their dreams.
They listen oftener for certain words, look deeper
in faces for features of one remembered image.
They almost forget the face. They cannot miss the look.
It waits until faces have gathered darkness,
and country guitars a wide and subtle music.
It rouses love. It has mastered its origin:

Death was its method. It will surpass its
furious birth when it is known again.

Dreaming Ezekiel, threaten me alive!

Greengrown with the sun on it. All the living summer.
 They tell their dreams on the cool hill reclining,
 after the daytime gestures repeat the toothless cannon,
 the spite of tractors over a salvable field.
 The cities of horror are down. These are called born,
 and Hungry Hill's to them a plain again.
 They stand in the factory, deal out identical
 gestures of reaching—cathedral-color-rose
 resumes the bricks as the walls go leaning—bend
 away from the windows, blank in bellwaving air,
 reach out, mechanical cat's-claw reaping sky.

I know your face, deepdrowned
 prophet, and seablown eyes.

Darkflowing peoples. A tall tree, prophet, fallen,
 your arms in their flesh laid on the mountains, all
 your branches in the scattered valleys down.
 Your boughs lie broken in channels of the land,
 dim anniversaries written on many clouds.
 —There is no partial help. Lost in the face of a child,
 lost in the factory repetitions, lost
 on the steel plateaus, in a ghost distorted.
 —Calling More Life. In all the harm calling.
 Pointing disaster of death and lifting up the bone,
 heroic drug and the intoxication gone.

I see your mouth calling
 before the words arrive.

The strings repeat it, buzz of guitars, a streamy

summernoon song, the whitelight of the meaning
filling American valleys. More life, saying: this rich,
this hatred, this Hallelloo—risk it upon yourselves.
—Free all the dangers of promise, clear the image
of freedom for the body of the world.—
After the tree is fallen and has become the land,
when the hand in the earth declined rises and touches air,
after the walls go down and all the faces turn,
the diamond shoals of eyes demanding life
deep in the prophet eyes, a wish to be again
threatened alive, in agonies of decision
part of the nation of a fanatic sun.

Muriel Rukeyser

FOUR POEMS

THE POLITICAL PRISONER

Listening to the seasons summing up
my case till they demand my death,
I grow indifferent to Spring's
recurring pathos: flowers of speech
and winter stocks at cut-rate prices
to sway and bribe packed juries.

They'll have a field-day when I'm dead,
the worm, Time and the Fascist.
Now I defy them: head erect,
eyes fixed upon eternity,
I listen to their perjury,
appraising the world, myself and history.

Joyfully now they carry on
their parody of justice;
and they'll condemn me with a grin
as a last wry joke on buoyed-up hopes.
After all this talk of clemency
I know what to expect: no mercy.

Why not behead me now? I pleaded
treachery to Spring, the State
and all your other brain-child gods.
But you must have your joke: solemnity
with imperial eagles and two-headed
justice in a court-house built on credit.

JOHN LACK-LAND

A fieldless plough-boy, unhorsed knight,
He drives and rides machinery
And smells of nature, grease and steel,
As others smelt of earth and horse.

Sunsets, above the fruitless roofs,
Reveal to him, through screens of smoke,
The morrow's weather and bring joy
To workshops where he dreams of crops.

Meanwhile, another nature-lore,
Reflected from machines and crowds,
Grows in his mind until he feels
The right to boundless ownership.

LONDON BY MOONLIGHT

At coffee-stalls men boast of girls,
cap workless days with wasted nights;
hands in torn pockets try to rouse
desires now drugged by long despair.

Beyond the railings, in the park,
the wind caresses restless trees,
deep-rooted, ready for those storms
which buildings have long banished hence.

The grass, depressed by heavy feet
and stifled by the city's dust,

degenerates, breeds life in death,
like thirsty mosses on the moon.

And lonely girls in narrow beds
watch the sly moon creep up their thighs,
too poor to wed, too much afraid
to meet the men at coffee-stalls.

AMARE EST AMARUM

Lady, there being nothing more to say
about your beauty that has not been said
by other men about their other loves,

Let me say this, that I have hoped,
despaired, day-dreamed, spent sleepless nights
like many others, with this one

Difference: living in a later age,
I knew that I must suffer and was glad
to suffer, grateful for my pain

Because all love is pain, life without love
no life, no death, no pain, no joy.

Edouard Roditi

TWO POEMS

VICTORY

O white and glorious Victory, you lie!
You are too white and clean to have fought any battles.

After the battle, *after* the sweat and blood,
After the slaughter, *after* the terror of steel
Against flesh, *after* the reek of the carrion
Friend and foe, *after* the horror of weariness—
You came, white and apart, to stand and say
"I am Victory." Victory, you lie!

Hammers here to shatter and smash a lie!
Shatter down white wings, smash arms upraised,
Proud head, white limbs, breasts under flowing robes—
Smash the carved pedestal into rubbish too.

Now sculptor! No dead marble. Living flesh
That cries, screams, curses, faints, under your hand.
Carve it with hunger, cut it with whips, then
Set it aflame with anger, hate, despair
Till it stirs and rises. Then batter it down again
And again, until, slow, slow generated
Under despair, anger, bite of whips,
Rises flame of knowledge to harden thought,
Harden muscles to steel, unyielding, tireless.
Then fling it to battle, hurl it against the far-flung
Tireless enemy, prove it, try it in battle
To the last shred of steel, the last ounce of will.

Let the waves of the enemy overwhelm, break over it;
 Let cold freeze, heat blister. Let all be one
 In fury of struggle—locked at the last in struggle
 That seems a straining peace—till, slow, slow,
 The foe gives back and falls.

Here is your Victory,
 Blood on his face, hands,—wounds, dirt, sweat,
 Panting and almost spent—heart pounding,
 Trying for one more stroke at the falling foe,
 Yet aware he is fallen, aware of the silence—
 Standing one moment as the earth stands still—
 Death in his eyes, and life. Here let him stand
 On broken swords, hacked bodies, bloody ground.

Here is your Victory, carved out of man, not stone.
 Seeing it, children will know that the war was not easy,
 Not beautiful with clean robes, gracious lines,
 But frightful with spent breath, sweat, blood, grime and death—
 A terrible, purposeful birth—that here is the pledge
 For the building after the battle.

Only with steeled hearts
 Can you look with open eyes on the awful figure.
 Think! Thus and thus alone are victories won—
 Broken the aged, immemorial tyrannies,
 That have shadowed the soul of man, that have burdened his back,
 That have cursed him, demeaned him, crushed him, thwarted him,
 Used tongues to flatter him, fists to cow him,
 Hunger and dread to weaken him—forced him to battle.
 Only thus the bursting of chains, the crashing of towers,

Flight of black bats and darkness-loving vermin.
Only thus the clearing of ground for building,
New and spacious, the home for the whole of man.

Out of blood, sweat, dust, steel, struggle,
Out of swift bullet, bloody sword descending,
Peace for the old, foul struggle, sweeter ground,
Place at last for the body and soul of man—
Out of the wounds, healing of ancient sores,
Out of the dirt, cleanness of worlds to be,
Out of death, life.

Hail then, horrible figure!

You who have fought can stand and say "So it was."
You who must fight can know that thus it must be.

VAMPIRE

The vampire sucks the blood of living men
Until they die and turn to vampires too.
You have to find the corpse and run it through
The heart with a sharpened stake, and only then
Are you sure it will not rise and walk again.
A grisly business, if reports are true—
Writhing and screaming, the dead corpse dies anew,
But you've made an honest grave of a vampire's den.

Though men load the earth with plenty, in dismay
They find themselves homeless, hungry, on the town—

Confused and helpless, hear their masters say
"We cannot help it, you can starve or drown."
I suspect vampires are abroad today.
Let's go among the graves and hunt them down.

Arthur Kramer

THE REALISTS

The demon-lover quit and poised for flight
Turned with farewell smile that broke her heart,
"What actually of me for your delight
Remains, save ambiguous space where part from part
Of what you called your life now falls in twain?"
But actual enough, for all that, was the pain
To her whom sorrow left as found, a struggling human.
And actual enough now for all the women
Is parting and despair and threat of war. . . .
No fictive dream deludes — for so they are.

Jean Starr Untermeyer

GUERNICA

Pare the bony structure of the eye with copper skein
No burned horse minces through the turnstile rose
Midriff cries of the cut-thumbs
Loss is a net of needles.

—Torn from a hat
Words without end
Strung to no pearl
 that bore the spliced rod

Impure foetal emptiness of the chess-board
That spins toward the dropped hair
Of a steel tower

Peeled stick
Sex of the soil
Pern of the night
 dropping to drain the burned grape of work—

Black twirling compass of the hungry shoe
Cow's udder driveling as it swings by the ditch
Dog of memory wincing up the lashed oak.

Prod the still spirited pipe
Build the round dripping stone
More the bitter clench than the broken hope
More the bitten grasp than the better prey.

JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY

Shark skin peeling from the sceptre of the night
Broken with collars of spending bran:
The fire shoes of the Savior slide the wave.

The window must not close
The bone will not turn
The clock is still — in white gloves.

Death is not a ship or a dog's lair between faces:
No book, no tower, no curled adder
Ever wound the green spring of the moon-pulled water
To the hollow fingers of the spade.

James Johnson Sweeney

TWO POEMS

I

Fivesucked the feature of my girl by glory
And the trumpet drummer, in a field of scars,
Works in a brothel band, who is my champion,
The streetwalk soldier slipping to the wars.

By the shorewind he blows, a rumsicked line,
Tearing down the cloth of battle from the story,
And the drugend way is tempted by his rattle,
The sickness in the throat, the killjoy fury,

Who, teaser in the field, shapes crackled hands,
Joints fingercharge into his silver tone:
Blow, boy, against the brothel bones of war
And save us God's inscription in the bone.

II

POEM IN TIME OF SHADOWS

For Sheila

The moment when we were alone,
Lost now while the long battle is on,
Sings in my mind constantly,
That you were so kind.

The lovers kiss now
Under a less revealing sun

Who in the light meadow
Play under the shadow of the fight.

Time takes so much away
And the writing of history
Records in blood
That the mood of the lover only lives on.

Nicholas Moore

HOLIDAY

The honeysuckle will flower soon and the lime.
 (Fall chestnut, fall curd-shower of thorn.)
And Jubilate Deo, I call the prime
Of honeysuckle, honeysuckle, hay and lime.

Creep high, rye grass, brome grass, foxtail,
 Stretch a-toe to the lowest cream and rose-
Heart chestnut heap, frail
Cool in cool sway green cool hands a-trail.

The honeysuckle will flower soon, and the hay
 Lie hot in meadows; rot
Of chestnut bloom sweet the air. Fall May
To June, and I get me a lime-lane, hay-meadow holiday.

E. Doreen Idle

VENTRILOQUIST: THE COFFEE HOUR

Against my knee the impassive wooden boy
Laments in tenderest syllables small faith;
He has not heart nor incalculable breath
Of life. He is, I know it best, a toy

Vacant of all but the life which grows greater with
His voice I speak, I speak through rigid lips.
Upon the air, his radiance of being slips
Kindly and plaintive. My death will be his death

Since he who speaks is my own voice's sound,
All humors, passions, small affairs of trade
I am the tree, and he is the tree's shade,
So intricately involved are we with the ground.

But now on air he leans and carries on
The conversation with my voice relayed, we are
One voice, stern questioner and sorry answerer
To coffee drinkers listening till dawn.

Problems unsolved, lessons unlearned, love denied,
What trivial matters are these that walk on space,
Little man hatted and gloved, who has no face,
Who begs forgiveness for his bills unpaid,

I am he, since my voice is also his,
Therefore is he his master, against whom he leans.

MARGUERITE YOUNG

It is fortunate for us that the wide air screens
From sight us both, the wooden one who is

All luminous man, all heart and evening dress,
And me, the flesh who turns to quieter wood
Than he, the brave illusion of flesh and blood;
Concealment is fortunate for both of us.

No one suspects what change is come on me,
The act is good. So be it. The illusion carries.
But there is an illusion greater than this
Where draped in the velvet void, how distantly,

I am a wooden boy against the imponderable
Knee of what unseen man, with foreground of skies.
I can conjecture his presence by old surmise,
The question of thunder, reply of a bell in the gale,

The question of thunder, reply of a bird in the storm,
Reply of the bell or the bird in the rain
So timorous, you listen to hear it come again,
So still, so still, and louder than alarm.

It is his voice that speaks through the smaller man,
His voice in doubtful answer to questioning,
He is himself and me, the wooden thing,
Through moveless lips he answers as he can,

And even in his answer falling lighter than leaves,
I am the delicate spirit who on the air does walk
Woven of sinew and heart from sorrowful talk,
A hesitant answer of what the heart believes,

And even in his answer have I escaped,
I am the insubstantial heart beat which goes
From him, in whom are all the leaves of darkness;
Who grows more silent than the thing he shaped.

Marguerite Young

PEELING APPLES

These red Jonathans all bear,
As knights once wore their ladies' sleeves,
The yellow shadows of their leaves.
Thinking of wide green boughs I pare
Apples for pies. A host of springs
Sweep back with their frail blossomings,
Laughter and stars and snow on hair.
I taste of every Jonathan,
No two alike. A different good
Pervades their scented crystal blood.
Once years ago I bit in one
Unearthly sweet. And once I knew
A heart as wildly, rarely true
To deeps of earth and lift of sun.

Helene S. Puls

ANABASIS

I

The lifeless comedy begins again;
no time to break the bread and sift the flour
of wasted days . . . Let the milkweed sour,
let corn die sheltered in the grain.
Before the mildewed year draws at this hour,
the blatant sheet . . . the heavy-lidded flower
has yet to alchemize this moment's stain.

II

A honeysuckle's vine nears secret roots,
and yet the flower often dies before
it blooms. Up what dark alley climb the shoots
to lick the walls, the cobwebs to explore,
to spread blind eyes between the spider's jaws,
to fling ethereal and clumsy claws
at light, and catch his elbows in their flaws?

III

A hole is worthless mesh to sightless eyes;
the string is tied, before the knot unites,
the day again will turn to cloistered lies.
The months that never pass themselves were hung
across the line to dry . . . The trap was sprung.
The plants will tarnish, silver apples rust,
and even preshrunk Time will turn to dust.

Yvonne Markus

THREE POEMS

SIR ISAAC NEWTON

(1642-1727)

An apple fell in England
And Revelation spread
Its haughty, secret sunlight
Within a bachelor's head.
The Abstract humbly rested
In symbol round and red.

Strong Force exerted pull
On him who clearly saw.
Unloosened from the stem
Of Nature—the heedless Awe—
The fruit and farmer's son
Were subjects of one Law.

AN OLD MAN TALKING IN HIS SLEEP

All day his old tongue spoke
Of what was good or fair.
Vigor an ashy coal
And pride a smutty flare,
The heart was no more puzzled
Nor mind clotted with care.

But when the clock struck midnight
Two sounds frightened the air:

ROBERT LIDDELL LOWE

His tongue cried out a wisdom
By day it would not dare:
Dignity had no bridle
For weariless despair.

THE LIABLE TREE

Under the Liable Tree
In fearing I set foot,
And laid a mortal ear
Against the witty fruit.

I heard a fighting host,
Buckled angel, devil:
An equal war proclaimed
No hour is good or evil.

Robert Liddell Lowe

TWO POEMS

A.D. 1940: AN EPIGRAPH

Childhood, that happiness helpless and grieved, was
Yearning, was solitude, a fever of shyness,
A fierce clench against tears; yet

Had eager miracle of fact, of thing, had nearness strange as
Distance, saw tree's ripe apples in the sun, saw wings,
Wings with their dazzle of names, white

Pigeons, swoop of barn swallows, black clamor of crows, supple
Maze of starlings, wrens' wings and thrashers' and finches',
At last a slanting sea-gull's, once the swift

Blur of a humming-bird. But time is casualty, fact hazes into
Myth: where hand had been, the moon (we said)
Makes a gorgon of that hand, whereon

We stare youth's rapture into stone; or naked in spring
We said petals are love's flesh, in winter said
Have blossoms the innocence of snow?

We said! And still will say, while scars' stun is not lethal.
Our famine whose feast, our feast whose famine? This riddle
Needs no Oedipus. It speaks of buzzards.

We, too, achieved that circling in the sky.
Still were we not men? heroes?
Surpassers of the vulture?

Tomb's bronze door though frieze-embroidered,

Tomb's door, tomb's trance,
Are not brittle.

But remembering swart lightning's stubborn triple gulf,
The gashed abyss, that thunder of metal wings,
Soul's sphinx is guttural with groans.

The shuddering air has forged its iron word.
Could we but choose! How cobra-sheer the
Hurricane, how clean the avalanche.

FRANCHESTER FARM

For F. P. B.

The sun gone, how suddenly cool it is,
How cool and still!

A weeder among shadows, what did I find?
What killer of flowers?
When dawn flames, brimming the heart,
Will my eyes be glad, seeing this hour's weeds,
Remembering dusk, this curve of dusk?

I ask, but who can answer?
No one comes along the path,
No shoe crunches the gravel by the tall grass.
Over the silo darkness rises, partly light.
Who stands beneath this apple bough—
Myself, or a dream of me?

James Daly

FROM "POEM IN CONSTRUCTION"

I wrote Helen a letter but got no reply
They say marriage is equivalent to to die.
I long for that girl of Park Avenue
And I long for her blue tiny shoe,
I long, in fact, for the past, the past, the big sky.

For now all I have is a book crammed with ink,
Now all I have to do is to sit still and think
With nothing but black characters around,
Nothing at all to take at one bound,
I'm the bookish man who must compendiously shrink.

When I look to the future I see the big guns
I feel the maggots eating, those angelic ones,
My compound fracture where I lie
On a field or in a cast, to die
Of the evil of a world the delicate heart stuns.

O the folly and wreckage of man I dote on!
O the mind that ponders folly I gloat on!
The ancient contemplation of the navel
Can still be a spiritual revel,
While the mad world flounders on, anon on.

Europe was, after all, like a jewel box
And gem of great price, a magnificent hoax
Seemingly limitless, magnificent
For a red youth to be spent
Among her mountains, cathedrals and ancient clocks.

She lay there like a mysterious woman
 With a myriad invitations and summons
 Wanting to be taken, but faking
 Wanton, uncommunicative nakedness,
 English head, Parisian heart in common.

She was a physical, but also a spiritual call,
 She held my life for years in her thrall,
 Wander-love best, in melancholy
 Came to a rest, if not holy
 By a Greek temple, a mossy dell or a col.

Chartres had its charm many a time;
 Grenoble, Tours, Nice, Amiens, Nîmes,
 Chateaubriand still at St. Malo;
 The old floods to miss at Mont St. Michel;
 And ramparts of Carcassonne in December wintershine.

London the male part and Paris the female
 With offspring of a beryled Taormina tale,
 Life stretching vexed limbs between
 Charybdis-Scylla sea-green
 And Aetna's white grain that the spirit not fail!

And Rome the city: the cost, the conquest, the catacombs!
 The old ghosts, the air's gold, and the old domes!
 Where the wear of the worldly
 Imperial power turned early a surly
 Light before cut Florence's high tome and cone.

I discover in memory how it is to be free,

Not in the event are there many eyes to see;
But eternal elation enlivens
In meditation time's environs
As equally eternal despair goads the mystery.

And still the evil of all centuries, contiguous
To every heart that this late roams the world,
Flares through the bomb-light a fierce flag unfurled
And still the doleful light is in us
And root of war growing, murder-conspicuous.

"They daily torture the poor Christ anew"
Somebody said, I remember it clearly
And it stays with me daily, yearly,
It is a statement that is clean and is true,
It goes through the action of me and of you.

But I think of her there, her hair all golden,
Wherever her blue eyes dart
Is a world of music at a start
And a roaming, and a ranging, a glory not told in
Mere fugitive replies of a risible pen.

America of the abolished towers to escape
In my kind of fighting: what was justice but
Raging on every ancient city's jutting
Of rugged, or time-sequestered beauty,
Discoverable sanctity of some lucid cape?

Or lively abolition of such ease,
The long galleries of Chinese sights!

Buddha's ecstatic calm, the still nights,
 Endless without decrease and without increase
 Will of a world, will-less—a world appeased?

Where the dull ox turned the dull stone
 Out of time, and the woman there
 So silent was in the immobile air
 Like a statue she, and a fly had gone
 Up and down her face unturned upon.

And the Chinese bells of the temple tolled
 Such nameless depth in the full heart
 The full throat uttered no cry,
 The breath made never a sigh,
 The peace of the place: green veils of mold.

Trance defined is trance traduced;
 The leap of the heart is the race produced.
 Incessant surges the summer
 Often the sea invites the swimmer
 And on the body the lashing tide of action is loosed.

O the glory of the unresolvable!
 The might and persistence of our lack of control!
 Buddha benign, Christ afire
 End our longing, light our desire.
 But words are the wicked talent of the soul.

Richard Eberhart

THE POETRY OF A. E. HOUSMAN¹

I

NOW that the *Collected Poems* are out, we have all we shall ever know of A. E. Housman's poetry. The long silence that followed *A Shropshire Lad* was broken by Housman himself in 1922, when he brought out his *Last Poems* while, as he said, he was still there to see them through the press. He died in 1936. And later that same year *More Poems* were published by Laurence Housman, who after a little decided that he could, without violating the wish of his older brother that nothing be printed after his death that was not up to the average level of what had already appeared, produce twenty-eight *Additional Poems*. Their number is now thirty-three, three of them rescued from old magazines, two from the poet's papers. To these have been appended three translations from the Greek, made long ago for an anthology of odes from the Greek dramatists. The remaining manuscripts and notes have been destroyed. The way in which Housman's poetry has been published is marked throughout by his passion for distinction, his craving to be famous, his equally strong and perverse dislike of being known.

The posthumous poems will not much change the estimation in which Housman has been held. They are work worthy of that proud mind. The *Additional Poems*, while they increase the sum of his poetry, add no poetic quality that was not there before. This they could hardly do, for it is apparent from the list of dates, incomplete as it is, which Laurence Housman has allowed to be included in the present volume, that they were composed along

¹*The Collected Poems of A. E. Housman.* Henry Holt and Company.

with the poems we already know. Some of them are contemporaneous with *A Shropshire Lad*; the latest, as far as anyone knows, is from 1925. What they do is to let us see the poet plain. Now that we have his poetry whole, we know what his personal plight was, and that is bound to affect our reading of all the poems. To know "Oh who is that young sinner with the handcuffs on his wrist?" is to know something that we should have known all along about those culprits of *A Shropshire Lad*. We have known and long known those hanged boys who hear the stroke of eight from the clock in the tower on the market place and never hear the stroke of nine. We know now for what crime all of them have been condemned. We have known when the noose went round their necks, but not whose head stood above the rope. They have many names and all have one name. Their features are not beyond recognition. The head is A. E. Housman's.

Romantic poetry as Housman received it was in need of correction. He corrected it. The romantic conflict of man against society, of man against immutable laws is still there, but presented by a man who had the classic craftsman's respect both for himself and his craft. The form is concise and accurate; but for all their lightness, his poems never lose the sense of earth, for all their grace, they are tough enough to sustain a considerable irony. The limits within which Housman was able to feel at all were strict, but within them he felt intensely, and both strictness and intensity are in his verse.

His style has in it nothing strange. It is not conventional; it is extremely careful never to affront conventional ideas of what a poetic style should be. The truth was quite strange enough. Poetry that pardons the poet nothing less than the truth, once the truth is assured, pardons him everything. The passion for truth

was in Housman. He could, in his poetry, condemn himself as contemporary opinion—in the very year *A Shropshire Lad* was written—had condemned Wilde. When almost all others had abandoned him, Housman sent Wilde a copy of *A Shropshire Lad* to prison; Wilde's answer was *A Ballad of Reading Gaol*. But it was not only on account of the poet that Housman had to consider prison; there was someone else, whom he had known—more closely, confined. His death is recorded in *The Isle of Portland*. Housman could go beyond imprisonment; not once, but many times, he sent his culprit straight to the scaffold. For whatever was will and conscience in Housman was conservative. It was on will that his career was founded and it was continued with a conscience as scrupulous as it was churlish, so that he could end, Kennedy Professor of Latin at Cambridge, all honors at his disposal and all declined. He was quite ready, if not willing, in his career as in his style, to conform outwardly to convention. For both career and style are masks.

"While I was at the Patent Office I read a great deal of Greek and Latin at the British Museum of an evening. While at University College, which is not residential, I lived alone in lodgings in the environs of London. *A Shropshire Lad* was written at Byron Cottage, 17 North Road, Highgate, where I lived from 1886 to 1905."

This, as it stands, is honest enough; but, as so often happens in what Housman wrote, behind the straightforward statement there is much that is not said. In 1892, Housman had been able to return to that academic career, from which he had been uncomplainingly banished ten years before, when, at Oxford, he had failed to obtain honors in the Final School of *Literae Humaniores*. Alone he had done it. His gifts that were to make him the most

formidable Latinist in England had never been in doubt, not even as a boy, when he had been the terror of his classical masters lest he should ask them some questions they were not prepared to answer. By his studies published in learned reviews, he had made himself known as he was willing to be known, as a scholar with that minute and accurate knowledge of the classical tongues which, as he said, affords Latin professors their only excuse for existing. He was not yet the great scholar he was to become, but the greatness of his qualities had been recognized wherever men cared for these things and, what is perhaps more important, he had himself already correctly appraised them.

About this time something happened to Housman that was not in accord with his will. What that was, there is no way of knowing, or even when it happened, unless from his poetry. *A Shropshire Lad* includes no poem written before 1890; the greater part of it was written in the first half of 1895. Whatever that experience was, whether he had been prepared for it at Oxford, as there seems some reason to suppose, or whether it came to him unexpectedly in London, it was profound and fatal. It was followed, as we know, by great emotional perturbation. It left Housman a poet. "And I think that to transfuse emotion—not to transmit thought but to set up in the reader's sense a vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer—is the peculiar function of poetry." Alfred Housman in 1895 was thirty-six years of age.

II

No matter where we open Housman's poems, we are almost sure to be struck with how young are those who suffer in them, how brief and sure their suffering, its course predictable, since all

has been known before:

These, in the day when heaven was falling,
The hour when earth's foundations fled,
Followed their mercenary calling
And took their wages and are dead.
Their shoulders held the sky suspended,
They stood, and earth's foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
And saved the sum of things for pay.

Whatever the occasion that gave rise to them, these moving lines can scarcely be read without bringing to mind the part played by the professional soldiers of the British Army in the retreat from Mons. They are called, however, simply *Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries*, and as they stand are as applicable to the soldiers of some desperate and remote army in some forgotten war of antiquity as they are to the men of 1914. Here, a particular situation has produced a tragic emotion; whatever is lacking we can supply, so that the event behind the lines is adequate to the emotion. But this is not always so in Housman. If—to follow Joyce's excellent and convenient definitions—pity is present in poetry whenever what is grave and constant in human sufferings is united with the human sufferer; terror, whenever what is grave and constant in human sufferings is united with the secret cause; then pity and terror should scarcely be lacking from anything that Housman wrote. And pity and terror do not lack in this noble and completely successful poem. And yet, in Housman's poetry as a whole something is lacking. Despite an apparent clarity such that almost any poem seems ready to deliver its meaning at once, there is always something that is not clear, something not brought into the open, something that is left in doubt. Housman knew very well what he was doing. He could always put himself in the reader's place. You must, he wrote his brother, "consider how,

and at what stage, that man of sorrows is to find out what it is all about. You are behind the scenes and know all the data; but he knows only what you tell him." What Housman told the reader is clear. But there is much that he would not, and while he lived could not, tell him. Of the suffering we have no doubt, but something it seems has been suppressed that it is essential to know of the particular situation of the human sufferer. There is an emotion here that is unaccounted for. It is apparently united to the secret cause.

Ay, look· high heaven and earth ail from the
prime foundation,
All thoughts to rive the heart are here, and all
are vain:
Horror and scorn and hate and fear and indignation—
Oh why did I awake? When shall I sleep again?

There is much here that is moving; but again the essential is not evident. Sophocles also believed that a man's best fate would be never to be born and, failing that, it were best for him to perish young. But Sophocles' pessimism does not, as Housman's seems to do, exist in a void.

The passion of the lad on the scaffold is made appallingly present to us; but for what crime he is being punished is not, in any of the poems in which he occurs, made clear. What had he done, that other lad who lay dead, never to rise, never to stir forth free, to be sent to the island where

Black towers above the Portland light
The felon quarried stone?

Or those lads so in love with the grave, why are they so attracted to that unfeeling solitude? It is not enough to blame the primal fault. Death has its attraction, and it is possible for a poet to put it in a moral framework so that we know, not only how strong it

is, but its motivation. Yeats has done it, not once, but many times. But in Housman we move so rapidly from the personal situation to an impersonal despair that we cannot but feel that something has been left out. What has been left out is his personal plight, which did not find a perfect solution in poetry and probably could not, so long as no place could be found for it in any moral scheme of which Housman's mind could approve. The facts are clear; the meaning is not. "Even when poetry has a meaning, as it usually has, it may be inadvisable to draw it out," Housman wrote. "Perfect understanding will sometimes extinguish pleasure."

It is possible that Housman did not want his meaning drawn out; but about that I am not certain. Perfect understanding of his poems depends upon knowledge of his personal plight, for until that is known, the emotion must seem in excess of its object. Now that we know from the posthumous poems what that plight was, all slips into place. The despair is explained; the scholar's abandonment of Propertius for Manilius; the reticence that at last seemed to fix his mouth in a perpetual snarl; the churlish silence which made the poet who had written the poems which above all others in our time have been loved into the least lovely of men. There is point to his philosophy. And we are at last in a position to understand the special pathos of *A Shropshire Lad*.

III

What Housman did in *A Shropshire Lad* was not to create an object of desire. That he had found, presumably in London, and none can doubt the intensity, the reality, the impossibility of his love. What he did was to make himself into a proper lover, or at

least into one of an appropriate age, and to create in a country called Shropshire conditions where that love—without ceasing to be what it was—could come into its own. He became young, but with such a youth as he had never known. The hands which for almost twenty years had scarcely left their Greek and Latin texts, were put to the plow. He was a young yeoman, complete with an ancestry which Housman made up, perhaps without knowing it, since he seems presently to have persuaded himself that it was his own. The heart of the youth was his, the temper was his own, and, what is most remarkable, the voice he found for him had the vibration of very youth.

The country of *A Shropshire Lad* is so created that it is with surprise that we learn, not only that Housman was not native to Shropshire, but that he had seldom been there. But once we begin to think about it, we see, not only that no such countryside exists in England, but that there could have been none like it in the last century. It is a country that belongs to the dead. What was important to Housman about Shropshire was that it lay on the western horizon of the Worcestershire in which his own boyhood was passed. The West has long been in popular imagination where the dead dwell, and, at the very time that Housman was writing, English soldiers did not die—they went West.

Comrade, look not on the west:
'Twill have the heart out of your breast;
'Twill take your thoughts and sink them far,
Leagues beyond the sunset bar.

It is the underworld. And to Housman with his mind on the classical poets, it is probable that the West is identified, not only with their underworld of the nerveless dead, but also with a classical world, long dead, in which loves such as his would not

have found all the laws of God and man against them:

Look not in my eyes, for fear
 They mirror true the sight I see,
 And there you find your face too clear
 And love it and be lost like me.
 One the long night through must lie
 Spent in star-defeated sighs,
 But why should you as well as I
 Perish? gaze not in my eyes.

If we love at all, it is because our bodies, if not we, anticipate death for us. But in this poem of Housman's it is to be noticed that the loved one can, like the lover, love himself and that if he should once be attained by that desire, he would perish. In the two lovers identity of desire is possible, but the identification of love with death is prompt and precise. Just as in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, Proust's narrator has never such conviction of completely possessing Albertine as when he sits motionless by her side and looks at her lost in sleep, so, in Housman's poetry, there is no complete consummation of desire until the lad he loves lies dead. The body that lust demanded must be all bone and contemplation before he is finished with fear and condemnation. Even then, Housman cannot delude himself into believing that any love, least of all a love like his, can long survive on the contemplative satisfactions of the grave.

Crossing alone the nighted ferry
 With the one coin for fee,
 Whom, on the wharf of Lethe waiting,
 Count you to find? Not me.
 The brisk fond lackey to fetch and carry,
 The true, sick-hearted slave,
 Expect him not in the just city
 And the free land of the grave.

To Housman, all loves are frustrate or faithless. The best a girl can do is to listen to a boy's lies and follow him into the leafy

wood; the best the boy can do there is not work her ill. The conception is, of course, prejudiced. Still, what Housman sets down is not so far from the actual conditions under which love is made in youth. The youth Housman reverted to was an imaginary one, and it is precisely because he was true to the imagination that he seems so often to speak, not merely for himself, but for all who are, or have ever been, young. What we should know from our own responses to Housman's poetry, if we have not already learned it more explicitly from Proust's prose, is that such desire as his, while it differs from others in its object, is most painfully distinguished from them by the brevity of time in which it is possible, even as unrequited desire. The youth's garland is always briefer than a girl's. And it is this constant presence and inescapable pressure of time that constitutes the special poignancy of Housman's poetry.

But if his personal plight is responsible for much of the poignancy of the emotions that went to the making of Housman's poetry, it also placed serious limitations on his emotions. And what nature had not limited, Housman himself thwarted. He is the poet of the end of an age in England and he is the best poet that could be produced at the end, as he is probably, in England, the purest poet of the whole age. His range is small. We have only to look largely at poetry to see that there is an honesty, a humanity, that simply is not in Housman, any more than it was in the world that made him. What was left in that world was enough for him to perceive how impossible is the achievement of all desire, how vain the search for honor and happiness, and yet what pathos, what beauty, what grandeur even, man releases in their vain pursuit.

John Peale Bishop

WHEN CHILDREN WRITE VERSE

The lovely things I know.
Beauty of the snow,
The green buds on blooming trees,
Ice-skating when the waters freeze.

Climbing a frozen water-fall,
Watching a game of basket-ball,
When the pitcher throws a curve,
Or a mountain-climber with lots of nerve;

The smell of flowers,
A man climbing towers,
Or a pass a halfback will throw—
These are the loveliest things I know.

Darrell J. Beckley, 8A

MY REASONS for attempting the study of educational methods for teaching children to write verse sprang from two or three motives. First, I wanted to know if Mary Austin was right when she implied that the creative spark might be found indiscriminately; and second, I have come to believe that if we are to develop a national language from the ground up, we must learn to use that language in oral and written ways which spring from early creative practice.

There is a third reason, too. I wished to do a little toward building for children their inner life—not a life of dreams, but a realization of what life means in terms of age-old concepts brought to a focus, cast in the light of our modern day, using the tools of modern thought. My children must not write "blue flower" verse. We had subjects varying from such hackneyed phrases as "Spring is just around the corner" to the "I am" verses, including "I Am Axle Grease"; such humor as "Eating the Doughnut's Core," and verses including library study such as "Alchemists of Old" and "The Races of Men."

Emphasis in the beginning study of an art must always be upon feeling. One has to work up to the point where writing is not a task but an act of joy and appreciation. Thus we read many poems by the great authors, some by the near great, and not a few by the children's contemporaries. A couplet,

Let Beauty, Truth and Love be sung
Through every land, by every tongue.

became the guiding theme of the series of lessons. Concretely, we developed in writing the beauty of common things: trees, the planets, all growth in nature, the human body and mind—in fact everything inspiring wonder in the child mind. Under "Truth" we made keener observations using the senses and wrote verses regarding them. "The most beautiful thing I ever saw," "The nicest thing I ever smelled," "The best thing I ever tasted," "The loveliest thing I ever heard." Under the abstraction "Love" we dwelt upon love of home, family life, love of man and woman, reading *Anne Rutledge* and *Madonna of the Evening Flowers*; love of country, reading *Daniel Boone*, *America Unsung* and many other patriotic poems. Love in relation to the "Mystery" was not forgotten, and debatable subjects like "The Nature of God" sometimes came up for discussion. Love of the arts and love of nature followed, with first lessons on "form" as known through all art forms.

It is well to remind ourselves of the things which make a child's world. He is a factual being (my opinion, in spite of fairytale literature), and therefore the material of his experience is limited; he is unbiased, untouched by much criticism, and ignorant of the wiles of propaganda. Primarily he is a happy person, for he sloughs off pain as soon as possible. He relies upon his natural rights for security and comfort. He is intent

upon his own creative pleasures unless thwarted by too much supervision. As a usual thing he must develop imagination through guidance. Therefore we must use a different measurement for what he writes.

Eight hundred children were contacted in this curriculum study. Beginning with eight and nine year olds, we first worked out "group" couplets written by the class in dialogue form:

Rootlet. Hello, Leaflet, how are you
Up there in the sun and dew?
Leaflet: I'm so glad to hear you call,
I haven't heard from you since fall
Strong March winds, the air and sun
Ought to cause the sap to run.
Rootlet: Although I am down so deep
I somehow know I should not sleep.
Leaflet: Since you've wakened from your nap
Why not send me up some sap? (And so on.)

As the verses grew they were written upon the board, copied by the children, then recited with gusto as a thing of their own making. Figures were never taught as such. Praise came as often as justice warranted, corrections were made in private consultation. One boy wrote only this:

The music in the air
Is like perfume on a pair
Of people in a home.

A little girl said her tree had "a neat pride."

Teachers working with me sometimes correlated the poetry hour with other subjects. Individual lines in the following were composed in a sixth-seventh grade class after astrological study:

Aldebaran, Procyon and Pollux, too,
Betelgeuse, so bright and red,
While Rigel comes in soft white-blue;
Regulus and Capella shining bright,
A goat's heart and a lion's head,
Dancing, dancing through the night.

Clarice Seldomridge and Class

The boy who wrote the following on *The Wind* has a pronounced gift for rhythm. Suddenly he burst forth with a volume of verses, most of them doggerel, but full of fresh charm.

I blow the snow, then let it go,
Then pick it up and take it,
I blow it into places, queer,
And immediately forsake it. (Etc.)

Tom Baird

This quatrain on *Home* has always had a haunting reality:

I am out herding sheep, and all is still,
Everything is quiet on every hill,
I am waiting, day by day, until
I may go home,—home!

Ward Baxter

To help other teachers I worked out a short test for "feeling."

1. How sincere is this?
2. How well expressed?
3. Choice of subject.

Is it in line with the modern idea that poetry should be concerned with the commonplace?

Is it taboo, being a prose subject to be treated from an impersonal angle?

Is it "raw" or "ready for expression"?

How much imagination is involved?

Is it sentimental? We want to teach children to avoid prettiness, stand for sincerity.

4. Does the form fit the content?

Vocabulary study became increasingly important. Parts of several lessons were devoted to the analysis of word feeling. Elinor Wylie's *Velvet Shoes* exemplifies an effect secured through a careful use of such words and phrases as "windless space," "still town," "white lace." The quality of the poem was beautifully reproduced in a verse choir of tenor and alto voices.

The following words are a brief list gleaned from a long one devoted to new words which the class thought might later be used in verses of their own making:

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

| <i>Unusual Nouns</i> | <i>Unusual Adjectives</i> | <i>Unusual Verbs</i> | <i>Unusual Adverbs</i> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| sorosis | whimsical | marcel | avowedly |
| magnetism | feudal | adore | modestly |
| tutor | modernistic | ramble | reverently |
| sable | melancholy | grumble | jocosely |
| cathedral | fragrant | lash | censoriously |
| octave | astrological | memorize | cunningly |

At other times we divided words according to Hiawatha's line,
 "Sounds of music, words of wonder".

| <i>Musical Words</i> | <i>Wonder Words</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| memorial | miracle |
| lullaby | suspense |
| dreaming | twilight |
| marionette | "illimitable air" |
| dew | silence |
| (And so on.) | (And many more.) |

When a subject is selected the first step should be the listing of a large variety of words relating to the subject. A rhyme scheme should be decided upon; but all leeway should be allowed the child when he works alone. Rhymes are confining; the free verse, if the child himself realizes it, is usually much better.

This study should become a growing unit in the field of English. There is need for many more workable methods, and certainly a knowledge of the subject of modern poetry should be a prerequisite. Teachers should know more about the living writers than they do at present, and should develop a capacity for understanding our national ideals in the light of our poets.

Beginning with feeling, technique grows, and with it we should develop a class of coming adults who understand and appreciate our best poetry.

Maude Sumner Smith

R E V I E W S

A ROCKING ALPHABET

The World I Breathe, by Dylan Thomas. New Directions.

L LANGUAGE is a living thing, and it won't down: suppress it as you will, starve or stifle it no matter for how long, mutilate or amputate it as brutally as you like, it will nevertheless, eventually, in some new and unexpected spokesman, vividly and violently revenge itself. For the roots of language are sensory and sensuous. Without that rich and basic and sensitive tactilism, it is not properly itself, nor properly our speech: and if for the little moment of a generation it may submit, apparently, to the artifices of too severe or narrow a culture, or permit a merely "social" selection of its resources, enduring a regimentation of whatever sort, this will invariably prove to be temporary. Sooner or later will come again those fellows who love language for itself because they live it. Not for these the paler and drier and more abstract or precise of its virtues, useful as these too may be—rather, the full tumult of it at its animal and sensual best, language at its most vascular and vital. The creative chaos of perceptions and feelings is come again. And the conventual excellences die, as it were, in sunlight.

Mr. Dylan Thomas is a restorer and re-creator of this sort, and the more welcome for being so overdue. For nearly twenty years, poetry has been increasingly the victim of a kind of monkish snobism: at the mercy of intellectual and aesthetic dandies on the one hand—effeminates, castrates, and theorists—and of hysterical social fanatics on the other, it is no wonder that it has become itself a sort of *castrato*. Eliot and Pound were

good poets, but devastating influences. Themselves "on the shrink," and acidly defensive, they were predestined shrivelers and wizeners of others; there was precious little of tolerance or generosity in them; nor can it be said that the generation which succeeded them a decade ago did much to improve matters. Here again was the acid defense—a shade more dilute, but essentially the same thing. The acid defense, with a notê of amused self-depreciation and apology added—in fact, poetry ashamed to be poetry. . . . And Mr. Thomas, a born language-lover and language-juggler, a poet with an unmistakable genius for the affective values of language and prosody, who has the air, like a necromancer, of keeping a thousand words on the wing at once, undoes all this sterile mischief as if it were simplicity itself. Rhetoric, and eloquence—? Of course, and why not! And all the rest of the poet's bag of tricks. He says right off, and emphatically, and unashamedly—

Now stamp the Lord's prayer on a grain of rice,
A Bible-leaved of all the written woods
Strip to this tree: a rocking alphabet,
Genesis in the root, the scarecrow word,
And one light's language in the book of trees,
Doom on deniers at the wind-turned statement.

And he proceeds to pour out such a glitter of magic—magic by itself and for its own sake—as we have not seen since Wallace Stevens published *Harmonium*. It is the answer, and the right answer, to all the jejune precisionism, and dreary ironic defeatism, of the past generation: it is the return of the gift of the gab, and let us celebrate it. If Mr. Thomas does nothing else—difficult as that may be to believe—he has already given us something priceless by breaking open this door. And

by offering us, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, another murex.

Conrad Aiken

THE LAST TOURIST

Cafés and Cathedrals, by C. F. MacIntyre. Oxford University Press, New York.

As you watch the players warm up before the ball-game, there is often a brilliant player on the field who attracts everyone's attention. He snatches difficult grounders, leaps into the air to make impossible catches as the ball is peppered around the infield, and generally gives the grandstand a treat. It comes as something of a shock to find some minutes later when the game has started that he is not in the line-up at all. He is a "utility-man"—a substitute—one who goes through all the motions of a ball-player, but rarely, if ever, gets into a game. In the case of the ball-player, of course, it is the manager's fault that he doesn't get in, but in the case of Mr. MacIntyre, who is presumably his own manager, it is impossible to understand why he should expend his entire poetic energy on warming-up exercises.

The present volume is a collection of observations made on a tourist's tour of Europe. He goes to Paris, London, Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, Pisa, etc.; he looks at all the things one ought to look at, including fish-markets, wharves, atmospheric conditions, art exhibits, and street scenes. His poems on many of these occasions are more than ordinarily perceptive, and expertly put together. His assonances, when he does not rhyme, are skillful, and he likes to tie up his poems neatly at the end,

so that the effect is very pleasant. If one were to take a frequency-count of his successful phrases and images, he would probably come through with a very high score. Knowing his business well, he produces many jeweled comments of the kind people like to call "exquisite." His style is precious—some will think it over-precious—and rather heavy on adjectives, but at its best it is good:

As if the town had not its fill of glass
in the canals where the bright malachite
reflects the palaces' facades, clear-cut
as facets—first the clean rain gave a glaze

to weathered marble, domes of time-dulled lead,
polished the humble grey stones of the streets . . .
then penitently the sun dumped a great load
of light, till Venice groaned on her deep struts

and lay flat on the water's golden mirror.
Now gaily people, pigeons, through the town
hurry to the Piazza and go walking

(cooing, nodding, laughing, preening, talking)
upon St. Mark's, debating which is clearer,
the old church, or this new one, upside-down.

Both in matter and in manner, Mr. MacIntyre's poems remind one of those very skillful colored etchings, about which one says, "There are probably people who like those things, and they're probably very nice people, too." One is left wondering why all his talents and all his very successful individual poems, when assembled together in a volume, produce so unsatisfying a total effect.

It is an interesting fact that many of Mr. MacIntyre's best poems are either those about paintings (*The Madrigal*, *The Annunciation*), or those written under very direct literary in-

fluences (*Autumn in Arles, Norwegian Three-Master*). Much of his material comes, that is, not so much from experience as from the experience of others. Of course, he is entitled to his influences . . . the best that is known and thought, etc. But when he exhibits so little other than good influences, one cannot help feeling like a stranger calling at his house, who, while waiting in the front hall and peering around admiringly at his taste in furniture and books, calls out, "Mr. MacIntyre! Where are you, Mr. MacIntyre?" But Mr. MacIntyre does not appear.

All this is another way of saying that this book of poems has the air of having been published for no other reason than that the author wanted to have a book of poems published. There are only a couple of things here which indicate any deep-rooted feelings on the author's part (the reader will be able to spot the ones I mean by thumbing through the book): they are attacks directed against some specific person, and motivated apparently by pure personal spite.

Since a poet writes as he must, it is probably both silly and presumptuous to prescribe for him. But Mr. MacIntyre's abilities are so genuine that one cannot help wanting to tell him to do more with them. His preciousness would become literary *savoir-faire*, his phrase-making would become word-magic, if he would only get himself something to write about. Some accomplish this by falling in love, some in these days by marching in picket lines, some by consulting their Holy Ghost within: but whatever the method it is a matter of being born again. Mr. MacIntyre should look into this before publishing another volume.

S. I. Hayakawa

THE MILITARY IMAGE

Sequence on Violence, by Harry Roskolenko. Signal Publishers.

The themes of *Sequence on Violence* are those common to present-day poetic sensibility: spiritual impoverishment, disorder, and the more specific complaints of social poetry. Resolution, if the verse is to be construed as affording any (it does not move strictly within social terms), is "the military image," reiterated throughout, of death. Paul Rosenfeld, in a short prefatory note, offers such enthusiasms as ". . . poetic form, progressive less syllogistically than qualitatively"

Roskolenko has included several long poems, simple extensions of his lyric mode. Among the notable ones is a sequence called *The Saint and the Bayonet* which posits Jones, a broker, as the figure of our society, and indeed Jones is that. Unfortunately the sequence goes on to employ the usual mock-Christian terms, reminding us once again that today the poetics of anti-Christ need not be as subtle as those of Henley.

There follows a crude and confused anti-fascist dream play, *Latitudes of Darkness*. The character of a soldier, particular of "the military image," assumes various identities for several poems. In *Jew in Gehenna*, the poem that concludes the collection, the military character is the person of the title. Here Roskolenko leaves off the pyrotechnics to define a position, though a sorry one:

Love is only gall
Thus love offends us all.

The military image and a concern with honor merge (with the image at last treated adequately) in *She Is an Army in the Sun*, perhaps the finest lyric of the book. Yet even here Roskolenko's music is awkward and excessive—which, since *Sequence*

on Violence is a first volume, may be more favorable than to say fine and impoverished. Among the others, the most successful are *Defeat by a Lake*, *Sea-weed*, *Ritual and Digress*, and the title poem. I quote the first stanza of *Sea-weed*:

Men who pause, weakened before some Sea
the woven images of sky—breaking,
the flood stream grooved between new banks
the air where violence scatters some whistling birds
the fear that wrecks the mariner
scuttling the stars, the Big Dipper—diving,
a lost point of light.

David Sachs

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY YANKEE

The Poetical Works of Edward Taylor. Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Thomas H. Johnson. Rockland Editions, New York.

Exhumation of poetry written by a New England conceitist some two hundred and more years ago might occasion excitement and some rejoicing. That we should have harbored a poet who might, with some plausibility, be spoken of together with Donne and Herbert is, indeed, a discovery. Both poets and scholars in American literature may well owe Mr. Thomas Johnson a debt of gratitude; and lovers of handsome format will take pleasure in this volume issued by the Rockland Editions.

Mr. Johnson divides the selections into three sections entitled: *God's Determinations*, *Five Poems*, *Sacramental Meditations*.

God's Determinations is an apology of the ways of God to Man, a statement of the Puritan creed and an exegesis of its justice, an attempt to urge its sweet reasonableness. It is dialectic in verse, and it fathers a system unimmediate to the mod-

ern mind: the God Taylor would placate and explain leads, too readily, to those recurrent questions of metaphysics which may fascinate the intellect but have little traffic with those emotional centres which may be a certain index to poetry. It is, then, deployment (now moribund through disuse and, consequently, unpossessed of that suspended judgment which enables poetry to realize itself) of Free Will and Predestination, of a believer's formulation of his creed, of his comprehension of others' sinful doubts.

The reason for inclusion of the *Five Poems* is that they "are unusual prosodic examples, unlike any other verse written by Taylor's New England contemporaries"

The *Sacramental Meditations* are Taylor's confessions, his spiritual preparations when contemplating the Lord's Supper. They were composed over a period of forty-four years, from 1682 to 1725, and it is significant that seventy-six of them are written on texts selected from the *Song of Solomon*. The present published group of thirty-two poems are those, from a batch of *Meditations* numbering two hundred and seventeen, deemed by Mr. Johnson the most superior, the most essential examples of Taylor's work in this kind.

Appraisal of Taylor's verse may be somewhat hampered by realization that this volume is a selected rather than a complete collected works. One must trust Mr. Johnson's taste and sagacity. This may be difficult: Mr. Johnson cites Taylor's last poem as an example of his constant ardor for deity and then fails to include the poem among his selections. It is irritating to read a poem's first line and be unable to appraise a favorable judgment on the whole poem or to participate in the good experience it is said to provide. At least the "Gems from Taylor"

instanced for approval should be within the book's covers. In any case, the present volume evokes responses.

It is exciting to learn that such a poet wrote on our shores. We may be tempted to render him too much belated homage; his metaphysical manner may lead to extravagant claims for his accomplishment. He is no American Donne. Comparison of his work with his English prototypes will prove his stature and his "inadvertent Americanism, a stretching for effect, a roughness in meter, a humorlessness of diction. He could be used as symbol for all the provincial inadequacies that one finds in contemplation of Colonial American letters. There is little of Henry James in him, and his verse is compact of what may be called frontier exaggeration not found in his English fellows, Herbert and Quarles. (I disagree with Mr. Johnson that Taylor is more like Crashaw than any other metaphysical. Not to consider the prosody, the character displayed in the verse of both poets is very different: Taylor's approach to the corpus of Jesus is not the feminine ecstasy Crashaw knew but is, as it were, a gnarled Scotchman lauding the Lord's blood and flesh with a burry word and an ingenious reticence. The sentences of Taylor's verse are, usually, abrupt, jerky, not flowing in an insistent, mounting urbanity towards God; his conceits are "quaint and homely," not winning their validity from an unselfconscious baroque. Taylor's verse suggests the experience of a down-right man brought to slow, careful speech because his God must be lauded and explained, speech won from the inarticulate meshes of his God-certainty, while Crashaw's torrent would seem to be the bursting forth, the fluent address of an almost naïve emotional assurance and, it seems, the freely uttered joy of an at-long-last directed love.)

The matter is, finally, quite simple. Scholarship aside, one must approach Taylor and ask whether he wrote Poetry and how good his product was. Comparison of his work to the *Emblems* of Quarles leaves little to be said for Taylor in a critical milieu where even Quarles is dubbed entirely minor and is, in fact, conceivably inferior to Marvell.

One recalls Quarles' poem beginning "Like to the Arctic needle," and one compares this sustained, dramatic conceit with any of the verse in this volume of Taylor. Taylor's is a halting utterance of knotty parallels interestingly coupled to frequent use of anaphora (the dramatic repetition of emotive language) "Lord, pitty, pitty us, Lord, pitty send . . ." At times his phrase-by-phrase structure achieves intense verse, and one must admire a poet who could write his forty-ninth *Meditation*. One must, however, deplore the archaisms of his diction, the straining for effect in his imagery. Nor is it capacious to indict this language difficulty: one has only to recall that Donne, Herbert, Quarles, Crashaw, even Cleveland (who, with Strode, equals Taylor in grotesque parallels) can be read with but slight reference to a glossary, whereas Taylor uses so many provincial words and coined parts of speech that it is with real difficulty one arrives at his meaning.

Taylor points the nice problem in the union of anaphora to the conceited method. The attempt to cohere dramatic insistences and haltingly sustained, often tortured parallels jars the reader from participation in the legato, emotive words and urges the half-intellectual exercise of renewing accompaniment to the parallels. The union can be effected Henry King, in his *Exequy*, achieved the marriage of conceit with dramatic, seminal repetition (directed pause), and Quarles (Book IV, *Em-*

blem 12) wins a not divorced effect through sentence control, parallelisms.

Taylor is, then, less than his metaphysical fellows in England, but he may well boast to a high place in Colonial American letters. One should not seek in him verse superior to Quarles', but one may well find in him agreeable variations on a signal style of English poetry. His taciturn, burred sincerity in addressing a deeply meditated Jesus will demand some attention and a healthy respect for his painfully won speech.

Howard Blake

NEWS NOTES

AT A TIME when many other English literary periodicals have been forced by the war to suspend publication, the appearance of the new and vigorous English monthly, *Horizon*, is a welcome event. The editor is Cyril Connolly, whose book *Enemies of Promise*, a study of the processes of literary creation, has received attention in this country. Among the contributors have been Stephen Spender, Dylan Thomas, Ruthven Todd, William Empson, Terence Heywood, Nicholas Moore, Clement Greenberg, and others.

The May issue (Vol. I, No. 5) contains the final installment of Stephen Spender's *September Journal*, which includes the report of conversations with T. S. Eliot about poetry and the effect of the war on poets. "I said how necessary I felt it to be lucid in poetry when the world was so chaotic. Eliot said he thought the poetic drama might be a way of attaining to lucidity, because, I suppose, it puts one outside oneself, whereas the poem tends today to be an introspective monologue."

The same problem of the precarious situation of the poet and artist in the present-day world, "tolerated rather than appreciated" in the democracies, suppressed in the dictatorships, is discussed editorially in this and the previous issue. *Horizon* takes its stand, thoughtfully and without heat, in favor of prosecuting the war—because the alternatives seem even more undesirable. "It is a war which is as obsolete as drawing and quartering; which negatives every reasonable conception of what life is for, every ambition of the mind or delight of the senses . . . But there it is. We are in it for as long as Hitler exists we must stay there. The war is the enemy of creative activity, and writers

and painters are wise and right to ignore it and to concentrate their talent on other subjects. . . . But they must also realize that their liberty and security are altogether threatened, that Fascism is against *them*, and that the war, although not as anti-fascist as they could wish, is much more anti-fascist than anything else that has happened."

Poetry, contemporary and otherwise, is strongly represented this year in the program of the English Institute, which will hold its second session of round-table discussions at Columbia University from September 9th to 14th. The series on literary criticism alone will include the following topics: "T E Hulme and Neoclassicism," by David Daiches, "The Poem as Organism. Modern Critical Procedure," by Cleanth Brooks, Jr.; "Some Critical Terms," by Allen Tate, and "Mimesis and Allegory," by W. H. Auden. This series is directed by William Y. Tindall, who will lead the opening discussion on "Scholarship and Contemporary Literature." Other conferences will deal with "Folk Speech and Folk Culture," "Literary History," "Dating of Books by Bibliographical Evidence," and many related topics. Membership privileges, including attendance at any or all of the round-table discussions, may be obtained by sending \$5 to Professor Rudolph Kirk, Secretary-Treasurer, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J. The English Institute is a branch of the Modern Language Association.

The award of the Pulitzer Prize to Mark Van Doren for his *Collected Poems* can surprise no one. It will be applauded by those who have followed with interest this poet's quiet but productive career, as well as by those who know him only through some of his admirable lyrics, such as the description of moonlight, *Land Tide*. Though New York has long claimed him as a resident, Mr. Van Doren is a native of the Middle West, having been born in Illinois. Thus there are two Illinois poets on this year's Pulitzer list. But the history award to Carl Sandburg for his *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* simply underscores the ironic fact that he has never received the prize for poetry.

A new collection of poems by Louis MacNeice, *The Last Ditch*, has just been published by the Cuala Press, Dublin, at 12/6 per copy, with a signed edition at one guinea. The poems are mainly concerned with Ireland.

From Richard Eberhart we have the following account of an unpublished phonograph disk made by Ezra Pound of his famous Anglo-Saxon translation, *The Seafarer*:

"I think it positively magnificent. I have not met nor seen him, but the voice has what means that word one learned once in Italian 'terribilità.' Deep passion, resonance, as if an oracle were intoning! With TSE doing *Gerontion* and *The Hollow Men* it is the best recording of poetry I have heard. He used kettle drums, which he had never operated before, rather hectically and wildly, but they increased the bardic effect.

It has long been one of my favorite pieces in English poetry anyway, and with Pound's strange passionate controlled force behind it I was lifted sky high. I only hope they publish the record some time."

The recording was made by Professor Packard when Pound was at Harvard last spring. It is part of a growing collection of voice-recordings by living poets which may be heard in the Poetry Room at Widener Library. A similar collection is being made in the Harriet Monroe Library at Chicago.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

MURIEL RUKEYSER, one of the best-known young American poets, has returned to New York after several months in Mexico. She is the author of three books of poems, *Theory of Flight*, *U. S. 1*, and *A Turning Wind*. The poem in this issue will form the text of a portfolio of etchings by Rudolph von Ripper, to be exhibited and published in a limited edition next fall. In the portfolio each stanza of the poem will be followed by a stanza of the song, *John Brown's Body*.

RICHARD EBERHART has contributed often to POETRY and is the author of two books of poems, *A Bravery of Earth* and *Reading the Spirit*. He is on the faculty of St. Mark's School, Southborough, Mass.

ARTHUR KRAMER, of Chicago, has been a contributor since 1923 and was a member of the original University of Chicago Poetry Club. He is at present writing a book on economics.

ROBERT LIDDELL LOWE is a member of the English faculty at Purdue. He has contributed poems to many magazines, including POETRY, *The Virginia Quarterly*, *The Nation*, etc.

MARGUERITE YOUNG, of Indianapolis, has contributed to POETRY and other magazines and is the author of a book of poems, *Prismatic Ground* (Macmillan, 1937).

EDOUARD RODITI was born in Paris in 1910, went to school in England, and is now an assistant in the French Department at the University of California. He has appeared several times here as poet and critic, as well as in *The Criterion*, *Transition*, and various French reviews.

JAMES DALY, now living near Diamond Point, N. Y., is the author of two books of poems, *The Guilty Sun* and *One Season Shattered*.

JEAN STARR UNTERMEYER, the well-known New York poet, is the author of *Steep Ascent*, *Dreams out of Darkness*, *Winged Child*, and other books of poems.

HELENE S. PULS, of Denver, was born in Colorado and has lived for several years in Russia, where her husband was one of the American engineers employed on the Dnieper Dam. Her work has been published in POETRY and elsewhere.

Four poets make their first appearance here:

NICHOLAS MOORE is a student at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he edits *Seven*, a quarterly of prose and poetry, one of the outstanding English literary magazines. He is a nephew of T Sturge Moore.

JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY, of New York, is a well-known art critic and lecturer, and an editor of *Transition*. He has contributed poems to magazines.

YVONNE MARKUS was born in 1923 in Los Angeles, has lived in central Europe, and now attends high school in Chicago.

E. DOREEN IDLE was born in Bristol, England, and now lives in Haslemere, Surrey, where she teaches art and music in a small country school.

JOHN PEALE BISHOP, the distinguished poet and critic, lives in South Chatham, Mass. MAUDE SUMNER SMITH, of Omaha, has been experimenting for two years in the teaching of verse-writing in about twenty public schools. She is preparing a practical study of her methods for book publication. CONRAD AIKEN, now living in South Dennis, Mass., is one of the best-known American poets. S I HAYAKAWA, of Chicago, is writing a book on semantics which is to be published by Harcourt, Brace. He has appeared several times here as a poet and critic. HOWARD BLAKE, of Boston, is the author of a book of poems, *Prolegomena to Any Future Poetry*. DAVID SACHS is a young Chicago writer. He has appeared twice before with poems.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Last Poems and Plays, by W. B. Yeats. Macmillan Co.

Personal Sun, by Hubert Creekmore. Village Press, Prairie City, Ill.

First Manifesto, by Thomas McGrath. Alan Swallow, Baton Rouge, La.

Insignis Amoris, by Marguerite Janvrin Adams. Fine Editions Press, N. Y. C.

My Heart Goes Home, by Mrs Alfred Chittenden. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

PROSE:

Windows of the Morning: A Critical Study of William Blake's Poetical Sketches 1783, by Margaret Ruth Lowery. Yale University Press.

Philosophy in the Poetry of Edwin Arlington Robinson, by Estelle Kaplan. Columbia University Press.

Robinson Jeffers—The Man and His Work, by Lawrence Clark Powell. San Pasqual Press, Pasadena, Calif.

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| | | |
|---|----------------------|-----|
| The Cactus | THOMAS WOOD STEVENS | 173 |
| On a Photograph of a German Soldier | | |
| Dead in Poland | JOHN CIARDI | 182 |
| Two Poems | PAUL GOODMAN | 184 |
| "To Undo the Work of the Creation—"—Electra | | |
| Graves Are Made to Waltz On | PETER VIERECK | 185 |
| Three Poems | HENRY RAGO | 186 |
| Meeting of a Poetry Society—The Newsreel—National | | |
| Hook-Up | | |
| Blessing Mrs. Larkin | MARGERY MANSFIELD | 189 |
| Two Poems | EDITH FRANKLIN WYATT | 190 |
| Stream of Consciousness—1816—Perugino's World | | |
| Poems for Small Apartments | EDWARD HORN | 193 |
| The Brilliant—Recall | | |
| Two Poems I - II | KENNETH GEE | 194 |
| New England Sabbath | AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL | 197 |
| The Imitation of Faust | ALFRED HAYES | 198 |
| The Medievalism of T. S. Eliot | LEO SHAPIRO | 202 |
| Reviews: | | |
| Clever, Disconcerting, Rash | LIONEL ABEL | 214 |
| A Singing Gallery | GLADYS CAMPBELL | 217 |
| Four Poets | M. JEAN PRUSSING | 220 |
| Aspects of Craft | WILLIAM M. SALE, JR. | 222 |
| Anthologies as Balance-sheets | EDOUARD RODITI | 225 |
| News Notes | | 228 |
| Notes on Contributors | | 230 |
| Books Received | | 232 |

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P O E T R Y

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THE CACTUS

A heroic ballad, in the form of a Hopi Indian legend, with certain political implications

*VERY long time there came no rain,
Old men tell in the kiva;
People sing for it, dance for it, still no rain;
People grow lean and coyotes die,
And snakes in sun too quick to catch
For washing and dancing, and streams go dry,
And village spring is a trodden patch
Of sun-baked mud where children cry,
Old men tell in the kiva:
Very bad year, and bad year again—
Three bad years, and then come rain,
Old men tell in the kiva.*

*But when rain come, it come plenty wet,
Summer and winter and all.
The cactus swell and lose his thorn,
Turn yellow and soft, and men forget
What cactus like, and they plant no corn,
But just eat cactus and drink the juice;
And nobody work in the fields—what use
To plant and wait when the cactus grow
Faster than axe can make it fall,
Mesa and field and plaza and all?*



This cactus Thing to the world was new,
An evil thing that sucked and slew
Corn and cotton and rabbit-brush,
As over the land it crawled and grew,
Faster and faster, loose and lush,
Till one day's sun and one day's rain
Would fill a field with it up to the shoulder,
And three day's sun and three day's rain
Would see it spread over gulch and boulder
Till all you could see from the top of the mesa
Was a seething, crawling saffron plain
With crimson fluttering flowers like fire
Sprouting from it here and there,
Pustulant, bleeding, and all the place a
Body of earth in a jaundiced mire
Breaking out with a crimson fire.



*Old men first they fast and pray,
 Paint bodies black and fast in caves
 For no such time ever come before:
 What good to know what grandfather say
 When no one remembers the dead in their graves?
 Nobody work, for there is no need,
 Nobody put by corn for seed,
 Nobody make a nakwakwosis,
 Nobody listen and nobody heed
 What old men say, and nobody look
 For good of the people in years to come,
 But all stain yellow their mouths and noses
 With syrup juice and cactus core.*



Women forget to grind the meal,
 Women forget to weave and cook,
 And even down in the kiva
 The men forget to make bahos,
 And the sun clan men how the sun chant goes,
 And the water house clan to count the days
 Till nobody knew when the year began,
 And the gods went away for they heard no praise,
 And love ran through them, maid and man,
 Without any law of clan and clan,
 Even down in the kiva.



From their lips and chins the yellow spread
 And the crimson flowers got into their hair
 Till the people were all as yellow and red

As the cactus itself, and as soft and bare,
Flabby and blind and slow and oozing,
Till the men had no more heart for choosing,
The women no lure nor guard nor care:
The men had the crawl of the cactus now,
The women the grace of a farrowing sow.



But one young man here, one young man,
All that was left of the Cactus clan,
He would not eat nor drink the juice.
He lived in a cave where he stored his corn
Under the edge of a hanging rock;
He was swift and lean, and he knew the use
Of bow and arrow, snare and noose,
And he could run from morn to morn
On only a handful of fire-parched corn;
The men of the village all admired him,
The maidens scoffed but they all desired him—
Back in the days of the rainless weather,
And he wore in his sun-washed black fore-lock
One gray fluttering eagle feather.
He had never taken his grown-up name,
For he had no kin in Mishongnovi,
So they let him wait for his deed of fame
And they called him Ushu, the Cactus Tree.



Ushu saw the Thing come in,
Gold and blood, and the people fall

But he would not eat nor drink the juice
 Lest he eat or drink of his foregone kin;
 But he let the dust of the mesa sift
 Over his head and he sat in shame,
 Seeing the people's abject use
 Of the crawling Thing that came and came,
 The crawling Thing that bore his name.



He sat on the top of a sand dune drift
 And prayed to the sun till the sun went down,
 And then the Grandmother came to him,
 Spider Woman, the great earth mother,
 Came up out of the drifting sand.
 Spider Woman the great earth mother
 She said no word, but she took his hand
 And led him home through the twilight town:
 She took three ears of the hoarded corn
 And she ground it fine before she spoke:
 "You are my son, and you are my brother.
 I send you a journey. Let no one stay you."
 She gave him the meal from the ears of corn
 And told him the tasks she would have him do,
 Then she folded around her her old black cloak
 And turned three times, and went up in smoke.



Ushu went out and over the sand
 He met a runner stripped to race,
 With a fine blue blanket swung in his hand.

"I'll bet this blanket against your feather
I beat you running—set your pace."
The runner was shod with golden leather,
And Ushu said, "I will not race."



He met a hunter who stopped him and said,
"I know where the antelope come to drink."
But the hunter's arrows were tipped with red.
"I will not stop to hunt with you."
For what would the Spider Woman think
If he did not speed as she told him to?



Ushu went on and over the dune
He met a maiden who smiled and smiled,
But he saw a gleam of gold on her breast
And a fire in her hair. "I will not rest,"
He said, and went on unbeguiled
And left her beckoning under the moon.



He came to a hollow cedar tree
Where he heard the rattlesnakes' angry whirr:
"I am your brother. Come with me.
Our Grandmother sent me to call you," he said.
The rattlesnakes poured from the hollow tree
And coiled on the sand, but he shook the meal
Over them all as they threatened and swayed.
"We will talk, since we know that you come from her,

But we will not come. The sand is cold."
 "I will carry you then," and he shook the meal
 Over their coils and over their eyes.
 Now snakes are the strongest things alive
 For they have no arms, and they grow very wise,
 And these four snakes, they were very old;
 If you dance with them and are not afraid,
 They will carry your prayers to the powers below,
 The deep earth gods, and the springs will flow,
 And the rain will come and the corn will thrive.



Ushu took up the four old serpents,
 Four old wise and angry serpents,
 And they coiled themselves round his arms and throat,
 And he ran with them over the night-cold sand;
 The wind blew the meal from off their eyes
 And they made themselves heavy around his throat,
 And hard as stone, and the night wind fanned
 The whirr of the rattles around his head;
 But still he ran on the night-cold sand
 Till he saw the glimmering dog star rise,
 And the pounding blood behind his eyes
 Made the sand and the trail and the moon blood-red.



He staggered down by the hanging rock
 And found that his cave was closed to him
 By a cactus trunk that had grown in the night,
 But there was a crevice the snakes slid through

And he took two flints and he hacked the stock
Till he tore that cactus limb from limb,
And long before the morning light
He cleared the door and crawled in too.



"Our Grandmother says: when the sun comes up,
Out and strike at the cactus trees.
Give them your fangs—their thorns are gone."
Then Ushu slept, and the sun came up,
And the four old snakes went out in the dawn
And struck their fangs in the cactus trees,
For Spider Woman the great earth mother,
Old Spider Woman the great earth mother
Could tell the rattlesnakes what to do.
All day, all night there Ushu slept,
But when in the second dawn he woke,
The crawling trees were shrunk and dry,
Thorny and green, and the morning sky
Was yellow and red as the daylight broke
And the hungry people howled and wept
For they found the cactus bitter and hard;
So each man took him a sharp flint shard
And they cleared the fields with flint and fire,
And the smarting smoke of the cactus pyre
Rose on the wind in a cloudy blue
Till the cactus roots were grubbed and charred,
While the people learned to dig and hew,
The women wove and cooked, and men
Sang and danced for rain again.



*The people grew lean and brown again,
Old men tell in the kiva.
Ushu's corn they took for seed,
And each man toiled for the town again,
Each man gave to the common need,
Old men tell in the kiva.
But the young man sat on the rock alone,
Chipping away with an antelope bone,
Chipping away at an arrow head,
While the maidens brought him piki bread,
Till he saw that the last of the fields were sown,
Till he saw that the last of the fields had water.
Then he rose and made the song of a man,
And he took to wife the old chief's daughter,
And he lives in the blood of the Cactus clan,
Old men tell in the kiva.*

Thomas Wood Stevens

ON A PHOTOGRAPH OF A GERMAN SOLDIER DEAD IN POLAND

Grant him at the end his common humanity.
His was the conquering step, he, the athlete,
The proud one who came with the Spring marching
The valley under, swaggering, counting the native daughters
For the Imperial purpose. His eyes were the haughty eyes:
The words from the speaker's box had given him destiny
Thundering across the marketplace. And the deceived human
impulse
Believed, ritual gave him purpose, honor's name drew him.
For love of the powerful motion he believed, quickened, came
Marching the valley under, he, the athlete, the proud one.

Under the new flag's given symbol of glory
The ranked boots pummeled in unison
The uncomprehending soil. The physical acres
Mudded indifferently with the many heel prints.
He was one of many in the anonymous ranks
Turning the bright fragments of memory as he marched:
The blonde girl, the Leader's thrilling gesture, the words
Of the orator's promise electrifying his spine,
The dream of heroes. Weight of rifle on his bruised shoulder
Invented manhood to him. The forward action was glory.

Now his unmotivated corpse embraces
The looted country. The scattered defenders
Loosed one random bullet grooved with his destiny
And he joins their defeat. Fatherland is here now,

This ditch in the raped country. His body counts it
More surely than the changed map. Victory's
Expanding boundary incloses him. Ahead
In the valley, summer answers the conquering step,
And autumn, and winter, but in this country
His simplified body dreams one season only.

Grant pity this much: that he was young as whatever boy
The blonde girl loved, and he came laughing to this valley
In the believed armor of purpose. Frame for his anonymous
And tangled flesh the order of a separate name,
And identity creates his tragedy. Grant him at the end
His common humanity— And turn to face the terror of his seed:
He, the athlete, the proud one, the quick-paced, he, the conqueror
For the gesture's sake, has served Attila before this
And the later Vandals, and for a hot word in the marketplace
Would have pockmarked the earth with his bullets, in honor's
name.

John Ciardi

TWO POEMS

"TO UNDO THE WORK OF THE CREATION—"

To undo the work of the Creation,
returning from the 6th to the 1st Day!

One man by eleven hours sleep
and sexual intercourse with animals.

The alpinist by leaving the fir-belt
and standing in the wind among the rocks.

The painter when he paints the sea and sky
as a dihedral without ships or rain.

The physicist, unmaking mind and life,
explaining creatures as kinds of light.

To undo the work of the Creation,
returning from the 6th to the 1st Day!

ELECTRA

I called and her eyes lit with recognition,
loveliest activity of the soul,
enriching present pose with ancient rôle,
perfecting many a latent expectation,
glory without addition, for nothing new
is added recognizing, except form
supervenes on hitherto difform

presentations neither false nor true;

all which the glad awakening of the eyes
 signals, alight with intellect and joy,
 —so thrilling! that those moments do not cloy
(though frequent) when the persons *recognize*

in classic plays: Electra at the tomb
 stood so, her eyes alight, her soul astir,
 returning to the childish days that were,
the while Orestes called her to their doom.

Paul Goodman

GRAVES ARE MADE TO WALTZ ON

Tunes fainter on winds waywarder than others
When from the frozen swamp the evil crystals glow,
Lure us to our disowned deep-buried banished brothers,
Our dark-souled scowling brothers,
Who pound warm fists against their jails of snow.

Waltz with decorum—one step lax or lacking,
One slip on our own graves of many deaths ago,
Betrays us: ever nearer the tune of tough ice cracking,
The hungry snarl of cracking,
And hands reach out to drag us down below.

Peter Viereck

THREE POEMS

MEETING OF A POETRY SOCIETY

You know the password, then. You have your instructions.
If you must go now, keep among the shadows:
The moon is our enemy: take care
And cross no open fields. You know too well
We are already suspect: keep well hidden
And trust no man until he prove himself
Friend to our cause. Be swift: be deadly. kill
On the mere rumor of betrayal. We must take no risk.
You swore your loyalty on full knowledge of the facts:
The dangers were not concealed: you gave your pledge.
You were told you would die before the victory,
And die alone. You signed. Now you have enemies.

The moon is behind a cloud. This is good time to leave.
Remember, we must act discreetly, carry no papers.
If they ask who we are say we have lost our names.
If they ask what we want say we do not remember.

THE NEWSREEL

Crashed against a world
A world
And silent explosion of tremendous light
(On us and over us)
Opens a universe

Disintegrates
This house:

Now time is hurled
Against this moment with dumb violence
Is whirled into
This trembling strange dimension
Is (enormously)
Contained:

Eyes
Out of unknown places out of unremembered hours
Look to us look for a moment and ask
And return.

Deny
Deny we know these faces
Say they lie who recognize us
(No one is sure in such a multitude)
Deny we know
The eyes without light the hands without hope:

They are shadows
If we wait they will go

Shadows
See shadows:

We sit in the darkness and wait.

NATIONAL HOOK-UP

When that small light flickers they're waiting for you
Coast to coast: the twenty million islands of warmth and light:
The deadly men at the controls in glass silence: the sharp
Towers twisting the sky in wires: listening.

When you get the light it means they're ready—
Over the wide yellow dust-lands, listening:
And in narrowness, and in the dark, in the furnished rooms,
They're waiting for you: it's quiet and they're waiting.

O. K., the theme. The first eight bars symphonic. Big.
And now your announcement—it's right there in the script.
Then the song—the one about moonlight or stars or whatever it is.
Whatever the script says. Whatever it calls for, sell it to them.

In narrowness, in the dark, in the furnished rooms,
They're waiting for you: it's quiet and they're waiting.

Henry Rago

BLESSING MRS. LARKIN

A blessing on you, Mrs. Larkin, for planting my trees!
May I, in turn, doctor this cherry or this peach
Through drought and winter killings! Of these many seedlings
May one survive that other eyes may drink the green!

I know, of course, you never thought to plant for me.
Mrs. Larkin, we do not know our comings and our goings,
But our times are a winter requiring all the virtues of trees.
I needed a lesson or two, in giving, from the maples,
—Sweet sap uprising, shade, the flaming bouquet in fall,
Boughs cast for any to gather, on frosty nights—whatever
The maple gives, the maple would give to all. But more,
I needed a lesson, in hoping, from the hemlocks,
Wearing their green all year, and pointing straight to the skies.
Where will we match—for skyward reach—the clan of pines?

Mrs. Larkin, I do not know your comings and your goings,
Nor mine—but should a wish have power, you dwell serene.
And may I also live beyond my poor intentions,
And see them branching, turning into trees!

Margery Mansfield

TWO POEMS

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS—1816

"I was so astonished when she first told me what she had been saying to Mrs. Elton, and when Mrs. Elton at the same moment came congratulating me upon it. It was just before tea—stay—no, it could not be before tea, because we were just going to cards—and yet it was before tea, because I remember thinking—Oh, no, now I recollect, now I have it. Something happened before tea, but not that. Mr. Elton was called out of the room before tea. Old John Abdy's son wanted to speak to him. Poor old John—I have a great regard for him—That was what happened before tea."

Jane Austen (Emma)

A thought-stream ran once by the pleasant way
Of Emma Woodhouse, "handsome, clever, rich";
Long ere the thought-streams of our modern lay
Miss Bates pours forth without a halt or hitch
A thought-stream all in modern disarray,
Exclaims, digresses and reiterates,
Till Emma snubbed her on that picnic day.

"How could you be unfeeling to Miss Bates?"

Said Mr. Knightley in the twilight gray,
Waiting the carriage; Emma might gainsay
Her snub; but blushed, ashamed of her ill-will.
"They had a very fine day for Box Hill."
Yet, in her long ride toward the paling west,
Yes—"Emma never had been so depressed."
Clouded her hours in England's green estates.

"How could you be unfeeling to Miss Bates?"

How very different the roundelay
 Miss Bates' mind sang from that of Marion Bloom.
 —Tea. Old John Abdy. 'Twas before tea. Stay—
 How different from the thoughts in Marion's room.
 But though Ulysses' wanderings away
 Scarcely surprise us, *we* have learned far more
 Than to permit our courteous thought to stray
 From any thought-stream's long, kathartic lore;
 Or cry that these katharses are a bore;
 Or moan that any thought-stream lags or grates;

"How could you be unfeeling to Miss Bates?"

For we have learned to treat a thought-stream's play
 With more forbearance, and have learned quite rightly
 Since Barbarism in the twilight gray
 Received a friend's rebuke from Mr. Knightley.
 And which will live the longer who shall say?
 Marion's thought, Miss Bates' more quiet lay?
 For Civilization, rushing on her way—
 Or falling back, if such your apprehension—
 Sometimes flings wreaths of the immortal bay
 On "unimportant" words of no pretension,
 Such words as echo while the carriage waits
 A hundred years ago at Box Hill gates.

"How could you be unfeeling to Miss Bates?"

PERUGINO'S WORLD

Perugino's world had a great deal of blue
In graceful dresses of flowing fold,
In the hills and the fields and the broad skies too
With their clear horizons of ivory gold,
A great deal of blue and a great deal of green,
And the way of his whole world was nobly serene.

Yet in those horizons of ivory gold,
Injustices, murders manifold,
Cruel sins in the Roman wold,
Caesar Borgia's basest crimes
Racked men's lives in the varied times
Pietro Perugino knew
With their pale horizons and beautiful blue.
And doubtless his world *was* nobly serene,
And racketing, murderous, mean and bad,
With ugly regions down roads obscene,
And much the ways it has always had,—
All swept with clear-aired mystery,
Men's ways, the skies, earth, everything—
And far in the distance a single tree
Stood, delicate-leaved in the early spring.

Edith Franklin Wyatt

POEMS FOR SMALL APARTMENTS

THE BRILLIANT

Most blandly eloquent of all
Are the merely plausible.

Bravely confident are they,
Fashioned strictly for display.

In a world of joy and terror,
They're content to polish error.

RECALL

When I was young I often ate
My cereal well slushed with hate,

And in our old dining-coup
I often ate disgrace with soup;

Wedge upon the dining chair
The hounds ate supper with the hare.

Daily, daily I grew thinner,
Did I dine or was I dinner.

Edward Horn

TWO POEMS

I

And there were other ways to live, forget
The cruelty of night, daylight's raw edge
Expanding without pity, and the seasons
Returning with new frauds to trick humanity.

The sea was always our pleasure, and the coast,
Loved from childhood; they made their overtures.
Tide sucked over pebbles, squandered sand
Deceived our willing hearts that we were rich.

And the rococo hills behind the town
That was a stage where natives acted for us
In peasant costume, paraded their sunset peaks
In the unreal and generous waste of nature.

There was the circus for those who could not travel,
The spinning swing, and rubber-muscled clown.
And on the screen the palm trees and the surf
Were brilliant gongs that sounded a gay promise.

And other ways: we kept our firmer mind
In all the shabby alleys of the world
And in the houses where the windows opened
On the desert square, the road beyond the night.

And knew a truth in the large anarchy
Of lies and aping fools and proud deceit;
And loved without restriction of the will,
Honored the winter patience of the earth.

Something was saved, then. But we always heard
 The tidal river louder at our backs.
 The shores were crowded, nothing was calm for long,
 And we were only fortunate for hours.

The years were larger than we were, we could use
 Some minor months for pegs to hang our dreams on,
 Leaves from a personal diary. After that
 The future rattled the window with madman's hands.

II

SOUTH

We came, down by those names older than we had dreamed:
 Avignon, where the avenue was loud
 With sea wind in the brittle leaves, and bugles
 When the warm dawn was whitening the stone
 After the night's last wine, the finally deserted benches;
 Marseilles, ancient and scabby in the summer.

Later we traveled by the coast
 Where the baroque villa and the colonnade
 Leaning in imperial fantasy
 Were meanly human by the larger sea.
 The poster tattered its idiocy in the wind,
 A gull scratched on the picnic beach
 By the gay labels of Cinzano bottles,
 After the parasols and laughter and gifts of flowers
 Had died in the evening of the farther mountains.
 We heard their voices on the promenade,

Telling old tales of new adventures: but love for them
Was long since buried in their winter rooms
And spring had faded along with album roses.
Their faces were beautifully bronzed,
Their gestures casual and arrogant along the shore
And under the awning where they watched
The bay fathering the islands ringed with foam,
And counted backwards through their days, made notes
On old delirium in now stilled hearts.

In the casino the jig of hands, the rigadon
Tapped on the green cloth in the deep-sea gloom
Where the black-hatted dowager, dewlapped,
Played out her system with her dead man's cash;
The ruin slithered through her drybone hands,
Money like collapsed confetti jingled
A drab dance on the sunless air.
Outside the street blazed and a beggar strutted
Knocking across the pavement on his stump.

Behind the coast the peasant landscape lay,
Man's hand was patient like an animal,
And waited on the seasons.
The far sea lifted the dreaming islands
And waves in blossoms drifted on the shore.
Above, the new white fort stood in the mountains,
Commanded the water and the pass, waited to shape
New history he would not understand;

While by the beach the townsmen chatted and made love,
And in the café we drank wine, read papers

Where lies of statesmen wounded our eyes;
And turned again to the innocent sea
Where sorrow drowned fathoms dark and deeper
Than we could count; or watched
The mild blue evening fill the square.

Kenneth Gee

NEW ENGLAND SABBATH

The ladies pass in sinless gloves;
The men accompany their canes
Along the highways and the lanes,
And peace broods like the belfry doves

There in the steeple, surplice-white
Against the blue. In every tree
Breezes intone a litany,
And birds give thanks with simple rite

For summer in this peaceful shire.
Now comes with hymnal and with psalter
That Gothic girl who tends the altar
And, lily-fingered, robes the choir.

Deep organ music overwhelms
The air, and humbles those who pass . . .
"We thank Thee, Father," sighs the grass,
And God is just above the elms.

Amanda Benjamin Hall

THE IMITATION OF FAUST

While I, here in this rented room, under
The hooded lamp, squeeze my brains,
Exhaust the battery of my eyes
And drain the fuel of my veins,
The night is rocked with thunder.
The unexpected violent summer storm
Draws me to the window where
I watch the rain boil in gutters,
Steam as it sucks down sewers.
Tonight the murderer is abroad
And the stranger is doped in the sailor's den.
Tonight, beneath the chandeliers,
While I grow hunchbacked in a world of men,
The tall women move in their atmospheres.
Shall I make this art my mephistopheles,
Conjure cars, success, women from it?
Thunder and lightning! and while
My backstage angel sings
I'll walk my simple devil from the wings
And like the restless scholar made invisible
Enter the hazards of actual lives.
Then come, the night is going.
We will be late for supper in the reserved suite.
Enter with the apologetic waiter
Who enters with the hot tray and the smoking meat.
The orders are we are not to be disturbed.
We too have sent the orchids with the witty note,
Enclosed the rope of pearls in the candy box,

Those pearls that pulse now at the basin of her throat.
 Mark this man: he is dangerous
 And at his gesture trips are cancelled, fortunes undone,
 The bride deserted on the honeymoon bed.
 Is this the coveted world you came to admire?
 The perfect teeth a world of cripples envies?
 The barbered jowls above the correct attire?
 Mark him closer:
 Though he stirs the demitasse with an engraved spoon
 How shall he feel secure
 Whose universe is founded on what his stocks will do at noon?
 What friend shall he trust when a bribe has bought friends?
 What woman when a fur has bought women?
 Chromium, sleeping powders, the private car,
 None of these shall avail him in the insomniac night
 When, turning in the darkness toward the butler's room,
 He sees himself a falling meteor.

Meanwhile continue, since you must know it all.
 Stand behind the gambler at the green table,
 Intense and weary with the long play.
 He winces at the ace that passes him,
 The jack needed and the queen drawn.
 Night thins and washes into day
 And cold and cramped he deals into the dawn.
 Upstairs at the private theatre party
 The company is waiting for the first reviews.
 The young author leans against the cocktail table.
 Whether he will be a failure or a famous man tomorrow
 The *Times* will tell him or the morning *News*.

Nevertheless the blonde who hangs upon his arm,
The ambitious understudy in the show,
Is banking heavily on the play's success,
And now she has a playwright will not let him go
Down the hall the retired couple
Living on their dividends, spend an evening home,
Mother with her knitting, Father with the radio.
John writes from Cleveland the family's fine
And Sue's marine she did at college is hanging on the wall.
The world is ordered to an obvious Methodist design
And God, with a slight Peoria accent, hovers over all.
The suburban emperor orders his evening papers and his pills.
The potted plants shadow the faces in the main salon.
But the elderly attendant in the tiled lavatory below
In the small morning hours talks with Christ
As the bell captain planning a racetrack kill,
Desiring the grandeur of the royal suite,
Delivers the pint of scotch and the water, iced.

Now bring me the Helen of my desire.
Though I have searched the cabins of luxury liners,
Sought her on the observation roof among the clouds,
Shall I find her tonight perhaps among these diners,
Lounging in the cocktail lounge,
Or when the theatres empty their late crowds?
I shall have boys deliver baskets of flowers.
I shall call the desk and tell them not to ring.
When shall I hear her step upon the stair?
For I have followed her through revolving doors,
Through doors that opened by an electric eye,

And when the music was loudest in the pit,
And when the loges called obscenely to the stage,
Her face was there and I desired it.
She will make me forget all humiliation
And cancel the disappointments I have known
For when she moves the Mediterranean is bluer.
And I shall kiss her palms and upturned feet
And on her eyelids weigh my heavy mouth
Until the night is filled with tropical guitars
And winds from Florida blow through this northern room
And fruit falls in all the orchards of the south.

Back. And the storm dying. From where I came.
The batik nailed over the bed The private letters with my name.
The hour approaches, that hour
When the heart is emptiest and when fears
Of failure and our own incompetence destroy us.
In that hour the devil that served us reappears.
Then pace the rug in the parlor. Turn the radio on.
Envy those who are not curious about heaven or hell,
Envy those who are not asked to bring back grapes in winter.
They are decent, they pay their debts, their sons are strong,
Though at night their catarrhs rattle in their throats,
While I, uncertain of the world where I belong,
Examining the heavens for a secret sign,
Inviting to dinner the outcast scholars and the dead,
Wait for the malevolent voice I know so well,
Wait for the appointed hour to strike,
The trapdoor opens slowly and I scream at sight of hell.

Alfred Hayes

THE MEDIEVALISM OF T. S. ELIOT

TO ONE interested in the Middle Ages, the complicated substrata of Eliot's *Waste Land* are still rich in source deposits, even after almost twenty years of analytical and assiduous digging. About one half of Eliot's notes to the poem relate directly or indirectly to medieval culture. Further, the very title and plan of *The Waste Land*, though based on Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend, *From Ritual to Romance*, are ultimately medieval in origin. The *Waste Land* is probably "*la dolorosa selva*" of Dante's *Inferno* (XIV, 10), certainly the Perilous Forest of Celtic myth (like *Tochmarc Emere* or *Echtra Art mac Conn*) and of metrical romance (like Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* or the Middle English *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*).

This Perilous Forest was a land, barren beyond description, through which the enterprising hero had to pass in order to arrive at the Otherworld (or to get to the Holy Grail). The theme is shown in *Perceval le Gallois ou le Conte du Graal* (Branch VII, Title 11), an Old French romance of the early thirteenth century. And in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, one of Eliot's favorite works (see *After Strange Gods*, p. 29, n. 5), the Perilous Forest, the inescapable barrier to the Grail, still holds an important place in the narrative scheme (e.g., XIII, 17; XVII, 9, 12, 18, 19). The following passage (XVI, 3) is especially interesting because of its closeness to Eliot in phrase and idea:

And therefore they returned into waste countries, that signifieth death, for there shall die many of them; every each of them shall slay other for sin, and they that shall escape shall be so lean that it shall be marvel to see them.

Moreover, the dominant mood of *The Waste Land*—expressed

in essence in the cynical, abnormally introspective ennui of the opening lines—is exactly opposite to that important medieval stream which is represented in Eliot's poem (in his note to 1.428) by the *Pervigilium Veneris*, a short, third- or fourth-century Latin poem celebrating the festival of Venus and the awakening of nature in spring. This poem, together with the naïve, un-introspective love of nature which it represents, supplies a consistently ironic commentary by implication and contrast to *The Waste Land* and to Eliot's emotional attitude towards the modern scene (as in his more recent *The Family Reunion*, Part I, Scene 2, p. 59). "Spring, beautiful spring" is foreign to the emotional frame of *The Waste Land*. But it was a frequent and persistent motif in the Middle Ages. It ranged from popular or quasi-popular poetry (like *Alysoun* or *Sumer Is I-cumen In*) to courtly metrical romances (like *Sir Orfeo* or *Fulk Fitz Warine*); from Chaucer (in the lovely opening lines of the Prologue), Petrarch (Sonnet 9), and Boccaccio (*Ameto*, *Filocolo*, *Teseide*) to religious lyrics (like *A Spring Song of Love to Jesus*).

But Eliot has interests in medieval culture which are at least as interesting as those in *The Waste Land*. Certainly his knowledge and love of Dante are important, possibly central, among these medieval interests. Not only does Eliot quote and cite him repeatedly, both in poetry and prose; he has stated often that though he considers Dante more than a mere paraphraser of Aquinas, he prefers the poetry of the Italian to that of Shakespeare because of the superior philosophy of the former. Shakespeare's philosophy is "rag-bag"; Dante's is "great . . . definite and dogmatic" (see for example Eliot's introduction to G. Wilson Knight's *The Wheel of Fire* and the excellent article by Professor Mario Praz in the Winter 1937 number of *The Southern Review*).

This is a fairly orthodox way of looking at Dante (the Brother Azarias-Canon Barry view), more orthodox than, say, Ezra Pound's interpretation of Guido Cavalcanti and his background. But Eliot comes to Dante by another approach that is much less common. It is an approach suggested in his essay on Baudelaire (*Poet and Saint*, in the *Dial* for May 1927) in which Eliot finds Baudelaire "essentially a Christian . . . near to Dante and not without sympathy with Tertullian"—to whom "the notion of Original Sin came spontaneously, and the need for prayer." (One should certainly compare here Eliot's remarkable statements on Original Sin in *After Strange Gods*, pp. 45-46.) So, in a similarly ingenious vein, Eliot has written of Dante in *The Sacred Wood*:

The contemplation of the horrid or sordid or disgusting, by an artist, is the necessary and negative aspect of the impulse towards the pursuit of beauty. But not all succeed as did Dante in expressing the scale from negative to positive. The negative is the more importunate.

Here again we have an attitude which is curiously typical of Eliot. In its stress on the "negative" aspect of Dante's poetic impulse, in its absence of relevant biographical information, it is scarcely historical or classical; it is rather emotional, subtle, individualistic, and "romantic" in almost a Byronic sense.

But as always, this approach is blended with a certain amount of classical or rational control. Eliot is always aware that the philosophy of the Schools permeates Dante's thought; and although Eliot never seems to say much more to show this awareness, I shall try to indicate to what degree his knowledge of the medieval philosophy in Dante has influenced his own poetry.

We can scarcely begin our study of Eliot's interests in medieval philosophy at a better point than with the remarkable statement in *Murder in the Cathedral* which is made by Becket when he

appears in the play for the first time, and which is later repeated by the Fourth Tempter:

You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer.
You know and do not know, that acting is suffering,
And suffering action. Neither does the actor suffer
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent that it may be willed
And which all must suffer that they may will it,
That the pattern may subsist, that the wheel may turn and still
Be forever still.

This passage is central in the play. Its particular implication is here with respect to Becket. As the Archbishop comes to realize, he cannot *choose* this or that path, least of all the path of martyrdom. He can will his martyrdom only in making his will subservient to that of God, in losing his will in the will of God.

But at the same time, this passage has universal implications; for it deals with that problem which was so vexing to the medieval mind—the problem of God's foreknowledge and man's free will. The wheel was variously symbolic in the Middle Ages of the wheel of Fortune, the wheel of Fate, God; as the last, the wheel could "turn and still Be forever still" because God was the First Cause, the Unmoved Mover. But if the wheel turned inevitably and necessarily, in what way could man be said to will his own "pattern," his own acts? This problem many of the medieval philosophers tried to resolve: notably, St. Augustine, writing in the early fifth century (in his *De Civitate Dei*, *De Gratia Christi*, *Soliloquia*, and elsewhere); Boethius, about a century later (in his *De Consolatio Philosophiae*); and St. Thomas Aquinas in the late thirteenth century (in the *Summa Theologiae*).

Poets, too, became interested in the problem. So Dante wrote

in the *Paradiso* (III, 79-81), shortly after Aquinas and in the Italian equivalent of Eliot's words:

Anzi è formale ad esto beato *esse*
 tenersi dentro alla divina voglia,
 per ch' una fansi nostre voglie stesse.

Fortune, says Dante (in the *Inferno*, VII, 67), should not be reviled, since she turns her wheel in conformity with Divine Necessity; moreover, man's freedom of conscience should be beyond her wheel (*Inferno*, XV, 91-96). (This last is Dante's conclusion in his conversation with Brunetto Latini, one of Eliot's favorite passages in Dante—see *The Sacred Wood*, pp. 54-55.) So, too, the problem of free will is a favorite of Dante's, who discusses it with fond repetition in all three books of the *Divina Commedia*: in the *Inferno* (see above), *Purgatorio* (e.g., XXV, 83), and *Paradiso* (e.g., III, 70; IV, 76; V, 19; XX, 94; XXIX, 55).

In England, the problem was treated by King Alfred in his Anglo-Saxon translation of Boethius, by Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine in his *De Causa Dei*, by John Wyclif in his *Logic* and *De Dominio Divino*, and most amusingly by Chaucer. For this last, the whole question was a very perturbing one indeed. Fortune's wheel made him see circles; and even when he tried to examine the problem in detail (notably, in *Troilus and Criseyde*, IV, 953-1078), he had to agree with his cock Chauntecleer that its subtleties were exasperatingly elusive.

It is this problem, then, with its rich medieval background, which is the central motif in *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). We are introduced to it in a terse line given at the outset of the play by the Chorus:

The New Year waits, destiny waits for the coming.

This is soon expanded by the Chorus:

We wait, we wait,
And the saints and martyrs wait, for those who shall be martyrs and
saints.
Destiny waits in the hand of God, shaping the still unshapen . . .
Destiny waits in the hand of God, not in the hands of statesmen
Who do, some well, some ill, planning and guessing,
Having their aims which turn in their hands in the pattern of time.

The priests worry when they hear that the Archbishop has arrived
in England, and the Third Priest counsels:

For good or ill, let the wheel turn.
The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.
For ill or good, let the wheel turn.

And the people, worried too, ask:

Archbishop, secure and assured of your fate, unaffrayed
among the shades, do you realize what you ask, do
you realize what it means
To the small folk drawn into the pattern of fate . . .

I have already shown that the first words of Becket have to do
with destiny and will, and that they are repeated in his conversation
with the Fourth Tempter. One may add that this problem
is referred to in every one of the dialogues with the Tempters.
Becket's realization of the relationship of human and divine will
becomes clearer with each temptation; he is thinking of this when
he decides:

I shall no longer act or suffer, to the sword's end.
Now my good Angel, whom God appoints
To be my guardian, hover over the swords' points.

So he tells his flock on Christmas Morning:

A Christian martyrdom is no accident. Saints are not made by accident.
Still less is a Christian martyrdom the effect of a man's will
to become a Saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become
a ruler of men . . . A martyrdom is never the design of man; for
the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who

has lost his will in the will of God, not lost it but found it, for he
has found freedom in submission to God.

And with the most profound intentions, he gives himself up to
his assassins:

It is out of time that my decision is taken
If you call that decision
To which my whole being gives entire consent.

Nor is the problem of foreordination and free will restricted in
Eliot to this play. Some five years before Eliot had written in
Part I of *Ash Wednesday* (1930):

Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place
I rejoice that things are as they are . . .

And in the chorus in Part II of *The Rock* (1934):

Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time and
of time,
A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history:
transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time but
not like a moment of time,
A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for
without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of
time gave the meaning.

And again, at the beginning of *Burnt Norton*:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.

This passage is supplemented in Part II of the same poem in a
passage which suggests Becket's "swords' points" speech:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards, at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity.
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor
towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,

There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, *there* we have been, but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.

So Agatha says in *The Family Reunion* (Part I, Scene 1, p. 17):

. . . Everything is irrevocable,
Because the past is irremediable,
Because the future can only be built
Upon the real past.

From this we can see that Eliot's interest in medieval philosophy, his high praise for Aquinas' *Summa* is reflected in his poetry. Eliot is interested not alone in the problem of free will, but even in Scholastic terminology and, through this, in the fundamental tenets of the Thomist system. By way of illustration, let us examine the curious passage in Part V of *The Hollow Men*:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

. . .

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

. . .

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow

The Shadow is the opposite of the "Word" in *Ash Wednesday*, of "the light [which] shone in darkness"; and it occurs again in the opening lines of Part II of *The Rock*:

They followed the light and the shadow, and the light led them forward to light and the shadow led them to darkness . . .

The Word, the light, represents the medieval transcendentals of truth, good, Logos; the Shadow represents their contraries: falsehood, evil, death. (See the image of "light" in *The Waste Land*, ll. 41, 308, 311; the closing lines of "Triumphal March"; *The Rock*, Part II, pp. 76, 83-84; *The Family Reunion*, Part I, Scene 1, p. 11; Part II, Scene 3, p. 133. Like Edwin Arlington Robinson, Eliot has probably derived this interesting identification of "light" and "divine" either from the New Testament, for example Matthew, 4.16, 6.23, 8.12, or John, 1.4-5; or from the Sanscrit word *div*, meaning heaven, light, day, which Robinson knew of, and which Eliot must have learned while studying Sanskrit at Harvard under Professor Charles Lanman—see *After Strange Gods*, p. 43; or from both.) Stated roughly, the idea here is that between life and Life comes Death, the Shadow; that Death must somehow take a part in the Birth. This fusing of Birth and Death may be seen elsewhere in Eliot—for example, in the phrase, "birth season of decease," in *A Song for Simeon*; and in *Journey of the Magi*:

... Were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here
I should be glad of another death.

On this side of the Shadow are the inchoate entities of this life, unrealized, potential: idea, motion, conception, emotion, desire, potency, essence; on that side of the Shadow are the realized equivalents of these: reality, act, creation, response, spasm, existence, descent.

We may set up these terms in a rough proportion, omitting such manifestly untraditional ones as desire-spasm, and the like. Thus: essence : existence : : potency : act : : conception : creation. The background of this opposition is Scholastic; for the most part Aristotelian in origin, these terms achieved the widest possible currency among the medieval Christian and non-Christian Aristotelians.

To take two instances: The doctrine of essence and existence went from St. Augustine to the Roman, Boethius; thence to the Arabians, Alfarabi and Avicenna, thence to the Hebrew, Maimonides, who passed it on to St. Thomas. The doctrine of potency and act was suggested in Aristotle's *Physics* (VIII, 5) and passed on to Adelhard of Bath, Maimonides, Albertus Magnus, Aquinas. From the imperfections of man the Schoolmen reasoned to the perfection of God. Man's essence is different from his existence; in God, essence and existence are the same, so that to say "God is" is to use two terms which are exactly equivalent. Similarly, man's potency is realized in God, who is Pure Act; and man's ideas, even the ideas a poet has of his own composition, are properly and perfectly found in God alone. Hence the medieval distinction, from this last, between logical and real being, as well as Eliot's distinctions: in man, the idea; in God, the reality. In man, the conception; in God, the creation. These concepts Eliot could have found in the works of the philosophers; or in more than one passage in the *Inferno* or *Purgatorio*, and in almost any canto in the *Paradiso*.

I have spent so much time upon the philosophic traditions of Eliot's terms because it is primarily upon our knowledge of these traditions that our appreciation of this section of *The Hollow Men* must depend. The terms and their opposition cannot mean

very much to us unless they refer in some way to facts of intellectual history and the like which have become a part of our intellectual and emotional experience. But when Eliot places on the same side of his antithesis motion and potency; when, further, he poses oppositions between motion-act, potency-existence, essence-descent, he breaks through these traditional philosophic backgrounds of potency and act (with motion necessarily opposed to the former) and of essence and existence which alone give meaning to his poetic conception at this point. Moreover, Eliot's antithesis is not any more logical than one which would pose as opposites cowardice and health, or injustice and courage. The Shadow falls amidst intellectual murkiness.

The above would seem to show that Eliot's understanding of medieval philosophy is not altogether clear, for otherwise he is admirably lucid and even exact in his ability to follow through the intellectual oppositions which he poses in his verse. The following is from the opening lines of *The Rock*:

The Eagle soars in the summit of Heaven,
The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit.
O perpetual revolution of configured stars,
O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,
O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!
The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words and ignorance of the Word.

Here we have a series of intellectually and emotionally rich oppositions which are exact both in intention and execution: Eagle soars-Hunter pursues, perpetual-Revolution-configured, perpetual-recurrence-determined, spring-autumn, birth-dying, idea-action, invention-experiment, motion-stillness, speech-silence, knowledge of words-ignorance of the Word. Here, too,

we have interesting proof once more of the unity of Eliot's mind. The birth-dying motif equates with that found in *The Hollow Men*, *Journey of the Magi*, *A Song for Simeon*, *The Family Reunion* (Part I, Scene 2, p. 60); the idea-action, with the conception-creation of *The Hollow Men*; the "Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word," with the incredible opening lines of Part V of *Ash Wednesday*:

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
The Word without a word, the Word within
The world and for the world;
And the light shone in darkness and
Against the World the unstilled world still whirled
About the centre of the silent Word.

This is precisely the sort of intensity—emotional in origin, but tempered with a keen rationalizing tendency—which has enabled Eliot to get at the essence of medieval culture without employing a great many of the disciplines which the academic mind might consider necessary. Occasionally, as I have tried to show, this syncope of the academic process has made matters difficult for him and for his readers. Where disciplines might not be essential to the poet of *Kubla Khan* or *The Eve of St. Agnes* or *The Lotos-Eaters*, they become rather more necessary in a poet who, together with his followers, prides himself on knowing the sources and on being free from visual blur. But if one may use "romantic" criteria—I am sure that Eliot would never permit it—such gaps as there are in Eliot's medieval background become considerably less than trivial at the side of, say, a thoroughly medieval masterpiece like *Murder in the Cathedral*.

Leo Shapiro

REVIEWS

CLEVER, DISCONCERTING, RASH

The Man Coming Toward You, by Oscar Williams. Oxford University Press, New York.

THE MAN COMING TOWARD YOU is a dandy title for these poems of Oscar Williams. The poems do indeed come toward you. Unfortunately, in the act of approaching, they exhaust a good deal of their capacity for becoming intimate. With these poems it is just Hello and So Long.

Williams succeeds in bringing off any number of arresting and ingenious images. Take

there near the lighted keyholes of the eyes
the universe came stumbling to the door.

An image like that forces itself on your attention. You may decide later on that you do not prize it. But you do look at it.

According to his publishers, Oscar Williams has been rather successful in the advertising trade. I will make bold to say that this bit of biographical data might very well have been deduced from the character of Williams' verse. For Williams' methods of handling words are curiously analogous to those used in advertising.

What does the writer of advertising copy expect words to do? Surely, not to *satisfy*. Satisfaction, for the advertiser, flows from the product he is concerned to sell. What words must do for him, on pain of being unprofitable, is to engage the attention of the passer-by.

Williams' images are strange and exciting enough to engage anybody's attention. But they do not consummate what aware-

ness they provoke. They seem to point to objects one would rather see than read about, objects one might even want to *buy*. Williams' "edifice of arteries" which "bleeds windows full of light years", his "new sphinx with the lips of economics" and unicorns standing "toy-deep among crystal alps of jargon" are more like advertisements for marvels than the incorporation of the marvelous into words.

•Now suppose that driving down the road you came upon a sign like this: SADNESS AHEAD, DRIVE SLOW. Such a sign would probably fascinate you. But instead of becoming interested in its verbal structure you would want to know why it was there. And if, on investigating, you could find no explanation for it, if it proved irrelevant to further experience, led you nowhere and informed you of nothing, you might end up by being disappointed and provoked with it. You might feel that you had been in contact with an ambiguous entity, a poem which did not lead you to ecstasy, an ad which did not direct you to act.

W H Auden says that Williams' poems "are concerned largely with the spiritual breakdown of the times" and that Williams "feels that the mechanized life is the Devil, and the subject of many of his poems is just this theme; while their form and imagery, like that, for example, of Wallace Stevens and Dylan Thomas, are romantic, violent, and exciting" But this is not the case. No definite moral attitude can be inferred from Williams' poems. I have read and reread *The Man Coming Toward You* and I am still in the dark as to what Williams' beliefs about "the mechanized life" and "the spiritual breakdown" might be. While Williams' forms and images do communicate a kind of romantic excitement, they have little in common with the elegance of Stevens or the perversity of Thomas.

Williams' basic principle of language appears to me to be sheer deliberate abandonment of principle, a kind of casting off of all verbal shame. This is indeed a time of spiritual breakdown. Words have become slack, saggy, lacking in character and definiteness, nobody knows any longer how much they are *worth*. Rashness under such conditions becomes equivalent to reason, is just as likely to succeed. This is true with respect to business and with respect to literature. Now notice Williams' typically bizarre effects. Notice that these effects depend almost entirely upon *chance*. The fact that two words or two objects have never before been brought together suggests that if one could at last acquaint them, something valuable might be achieved. It must be admitted that if one employs this method conscientiously, if one methodically tries to bring umbrellas into fortuitous conjunction with operating tables and sewing machines, in accordance with the formula of Lautréaumont, some rhetorical successes must result. In revenge, such successes will be arbitrary, unintentional, impotent to form a system. The question arises: who is to be complimented for them? who is their author? the poet? or chance?

Now Dylan Thomas, too, has been regarded as a poet of the arbitrary and unintended chance. This, I think, is a mistake. Thomas is unsystematic with respect to ideational meanings, but he is a careful and consistent artist of the sound values of words. And, strange as it may be to think so, his word textures have content. Thomas operates with a selected vocabulary and a restricted subject matter: sexual experience. Even when he is not directly dealing with the erotic, he suggests the erotic by his very manner of combining words. With brilliant combinations of assonance and dissonance, he causes words to attract

and repel each other, to rub, jostle, couple in exasperated alliterative intensity, until the harsh rhythm rends them violently apart. Thomas does not express reasoned generalizations, but his highly original style leaves nothing at all to chance. Thomas has lapses, but he does not, like Williams, depend on them.

The whole morality of poetry as a humanistic discipline lies in its attempt to eliminate the element of accident from language, or, since that is an ideal limit never to be realized, in its effort to organize the very accidents of language into a system of some sort. Now the surrealists, who broke with all conventional moralities, broke also with the morality of the poetic tradition. They deliberately cultivated rhetorically disreputable effects. Is Oscar Williams then a surrealist? I do not think so. When Williams writes, "faith wears a mist of swords in his right hand" the sentiment is all that moral convention could desire. Only the type of expressiveness is disreputable. This, of course, is Williams at his worst.

At his best, William is clever, disconcerting, rash, and impudent. "The man coming toward you," he writes, "is marching forward on all fronts." On all the fronts of rhetoric and in the most bewildering disorder.

Lionel Abel

A SINGING GALLERY

Slow Wall, by Leonora Speyer. Alfred A. Knopf.

Leonora Speyer's volume *Slow Wall* is one of new and selected poems; at least half are from her earlier books. It takes its title from the first poem *Of Buildings*:

But they who roof slow walls on grief
Shall find, not stately but secure,
A dwelling-house that will endure.

For the most part, however, the poems do not suggest a building on grief. In content many are either lyrical treatments of narration, or images introduced in an expository context. Few are essentially lyrical; they seem so only because of Mrs. Speyer's virtuosity in creating melodious and rhythmical sound effects. Her characteristic technique in the non-narrative poems is the presentation of a number of images that succeed each other without organization and which therefore can reach no climax. Sometimes this sequence is the whole poem, but in a number of poems a substitute for the true climax, an exclamation voicing an emotional reaction to the images, is added; or an expository note is offered, either as introduction or ending, as in the poem called *Happy Is He*, which ends:

Sleeping is good and dreams are good,
And a wide, white bed for their fickle sake;
But a bird at dawn in a greenening tree,
And the sound of its fluty filigree,
Is worth the night awake.

Mrs. Speyer's use of images is that of one to whom simile is natural—so easy and natural that she does not select and repress effectively. She conveys the separate images clearly, but they are often inappropriate to the context either in logic or mood. For example, in *Bird in a Tree* the opening image is one of sight metaphorical for sound

How snug the note
Deep-folded to the green,
The feathered one unseen.

The bird remains unseen throughout the poem; we are told that it is "Enough to hear, to know the song is there," yet immediately afterward we are asked to

Seek with the mind
To where the wild one swings

spired by Dante, the narration is clear (involving only one somewhat concealed leap from past to present), the imagery is almost always appropriate, and the rhythm is hurried with a forward motion that carries the reader swiftly to the lyrical climax.

And there are other poems in which the faults which we have observed are so dominated by the movement and meaning of the whole that they fall into obscurity in the larger design.

Gladys Campbell

FOUR POETS

This, My Letter, by Sara Henderson Hay. Alfred A. Knopf.

Man in the Shadows, by Elias Lieberman. Liveright.

San Joaquin, by William Everson. Ward Ritchie Press, Los Angeles

Broken Crescendo, by Anne Hamilton. Ward Ritchie Press.

It has been said that there ought to be a name for poetry that is not poetry. Some call it verse; I can think of no better word, although "verse" is somewhat misleading. There is good and bad and mediocre verse, but when it comes to poetry, either it is, or it isn't. These four volumes consist largely of verse, of all grades. The moments of poetry are few.

Take, for example, Anne Hamilton's *Broken Crescendo*. Here is verse that is above the average; there is considerable technical skill and some effective phrasing, though nothing that goes beyond the stone's throw or deeper than the grass's root. One looks in vain through these neat pages for some word, some line that might make one pause, go back, and read again. There is too much "lacquered green formality," and the ideal implied in Miss Hamilton's prayer, "Thank God that I am decently/ inhibited

to symmetry!" might well have been left unvoiced and unwished for.

It takes a certain amount of courage to review *Man in the Shadows* by Elias Lieberman, who says to any critic, "Phrase taster, stop pretending/ Poems are cups of tea." Here is a book of over 100 pages that one wishes had been cut to half its length; the good and bad are side by side not only on the page but in the same poem. At his best Mr. Lieberman has a commanding virile quality, although he asserts too loudly and too often that the world of dreams is far superior to the world of reality. It is when he deserts this theme to observe and reflect upon the objective world that he gains his greatest effectiveness; for example, in the sonnet *Employment Agency*, with its closing couplet:

There is no force like hunger's hammer beats
To drag the dead erect along the streets.

This, My Letter, by Sara Henderson Hay, is interesting primarily as the reflection of the author's personality. It succeeds in giving us the portrait of a radiant and lovely young person, one with a keen mind, who can see the foibles of her fellow men without malice. By and large, this is exceptionally good verse, which sometimes rises to real poetry, as in *Of Faith*, *Song Before Spring*, and *Jacob Sings*. Miss Hay is at her best when she is simple. One is often reminded of Emily Dickinson; here, too, are the moth, the grasshopper, the turtle, the snail; and here are the attendant didacticisms, usually not too obvious. This poet has something to say, and while it is seldom profound, it is nevertheless, good to hear.

William Everson's *San Joaquin* is written by a young Californian who lives close to his land, the San Joaquin valley, "a land

of grapes, peaches, and cotton, green and flower-strewn in spring-time, sweltering in summer, misty-dripping in winter." Here is strong regionalism, but with boundless horizons. Here is poetry. Although one recognizes immediately his indebtedness to Jeffers, this does not obscure the emerging outlines of his own thought and style. His poems have one marked weakness: the cadence, although musical and firm, is seldom varied. But there seem to be great possibilities in Everson, only partially realized in this volume.

M. Jean Prussing

ASPECTS OF CRAFT

The Poet's Work, by John Holmes. Oxford University Press, New York.

Lyrics in Brief, edited by Tom Boggs. The Powgen Press.

Both these volumes were put together somewhat as men make scrap books of poetry and prose for their personal delight and the entertainment of their friends. Mr. Holmes—a poet himself—has collected bits of prose and verse from the writings of other poets, and from the works of philosophers, critics, novelists, and painters. He has arranged these bits—at times somewhat arbitrarily—under separate headings, when he feels that they reveal aspects of the poet's craft, of the poet's nature, or of the poet's "world." Mr. Boggs's slender anthology, *Lyrics in Brief*, is, despite its merits, a "gift book."

Inasmuch as both men were governed in their selections primarily by their own tastes, the autobiographical implications are considerable. Mr. Boggs, however, will probably find many modern readers who share his delights, if these readers are not annoyed by the recondite nature of the collection, if they do not feel

that it was a gesture which led him to include verses of Charles Dickens and Daniel DeFoe, or that he has somewhat militantly espoused certain "neglected" modern poets. Though the volume is small, the chronological range is wide; and the taste exhibited is in the main for those poems which show sharp-edged, clearly defined lines and a mastery of form. The preference for these qualities has led Mr. Boggs to a reconsideration of Donne, of Dryden, of Christopher Smart, and of William Blake. He wants to preserve those moments in poetry when it seems to him that "vital perception is wed to consummate expression," and he finds such moments as far apart as are William Dunbar and Wallace Stevens. It is difficult, however, to decide for whom such a slight anthology supplies a real need.

Mr. Holmes's book, more ambitious in its scope, is more of a *pot-pourri*, differentiated from other collections of "elegant extracts" only because Mr. Holmes is a poet and not merely an editor with paste-pot and scissors. He justifies his labors and his trials with copyright owners by testifying that the passages selected have never failed to "lift and enlarge" his own vision, and by expressing the hope that they will have the same effect on his readers. He also feels that the book may have a place in the classroom where poetry is being discussed.

It is of course impossible to predict how many readers will find their vision lifted and enlarged by reading these passages, but Mr. Holmes trusts somewhat too completely in the ability of all his authors to articulate an awareness of themselves and of their processes. Some are highly self-conscious observers, genuine critics: others talk about their tools and their work with a curious inability to make distinctions. Only a few have either an interest in, or a genuine capacity for, generalized statement;

only a few are able to write about poetry and poets, instead of about their poems and themselves. The ability to use words effectively is not always combined with an ability to write effectively about the nature of words and their uses; and many of the comments on words are in reality half-formed little poems, songs of praise, and thanksgiving to words. Mr. Holmes, however, makes no attempt to differentiate among his witnesses, and leaves the general reader with the assumption that Christopher Morley, T. S. Eliot, Sherwood Anderson, Ezra Pound, and Logan Pearsall Smith are equally competent.

But however fitfully the book has thrown light upon the "poet's work," it has steadily illuminated Mr. Holmes's mind, revealing obviously the nature and scope of his reading, and less obviously an explanation of the strength and the limitations of his own poetry. This is not the time nor the place to put the book to such use, but it might be pointed out that he includes one passage from Eliot and fifteen from Frost; four from Coleridge and twenty-one from Emerson and Thoreau. Carlyle is cited with comparative frequency, but Arnold and Dryden do not appear at all. Mr. Holmes cheerfully admits that he has a bias; but it is disconcerting to find such slight representation of those men who have been most discriminating in writing about their craft.

With a view to the use of the book in the classroom, Mr. Holmes has frequently thrown into juxtaposition passages which are seemingly contradictory or at odds with each other. The design is to provoke "discussion," and to create what Mr. Holmes calls temporary "bewilderment." If such apparent contradictions are resolved into "true" and "false"—that is, if they are read as statements and not in the main as prose poems—then the state

of mind which follows bewilderment will be worse than the preceding darkness.

William M. Sale, Jr.

ANTHOLOGIES AS BALANCE-SHEETS

Anthologie des Poètes de la N.R.F. Paris: Gallimard.

The publication of an anthology of modern French poetry is a rare and always significant event: rare because of the complicated copyright conditions created by the disappearance of so many small publishing-firms which, in recent years, have catered to the advanced reading-public, significant because France has contributed more to the modern movement in poetry than any other country, both by publishing a greater number of poets and by producing poets who attempted a greater variety of techniques and expressed more varied and extreme theories of poetry. Such an anthology thus illustrates the whole modern movement's many conflicting poetics; the modern poet and his readers, by studying it, can take stock of the present situation in advanced poetry, can balance its achievements and failures.

An anthology is a choice and every choice betrays a point of view. In this case, the point of view is that of a publishing-firm which has grown around a single magazine and published many of the most important writers of our century, from Gide, Proust and Valéry to the surrealists and the more recent proletarian school. After some thirty years of this valuable activity, the *Nouvelle Revue Française* now offers us a quintessence of the many volumes of poetry which were submitted to it and not rejected. The anthology does not pretend to give a complete picture of modern French poetry. Francis Jammes, who sought to revive the simple lyrical faith of the Franciscan poets; Paul

Fort, who returned to the clear ballad-forms of the late Middle Ages; Toulet, Henri Herz and the other fantastically philosophical humorists who continued the traditions of La Fontaine, Heine and Laforgue; Max Elskamp, Tzara and Gaillard, dadaists or surrealists,—all these are excluded because their works were published by other firms. André Breton and Aragon, founders of surrealism, have not contributed, though published by the *N.R.F.*; Breton's literary politics, Aragon's communism, probably prevent them from co-operating in such ventures. Some few poets, of very slight importance, are included because the firm once published their works and wishes to remind us of them. Some of Rilke's French poems, so fine but so rarely remembered, are luckily included; and Saint-John Perse, whom Eliot translated into English, can here be studied for the first time in an anthology, in a suitable context of comparative modern literature.

Paul Valéry has contributed a preface which, in itself, is important: *Questions de Poésie* dovetails exactly into his other recent studies of poetry and poetics, which cannot properly be discussed or appreciated within the scope of this review. Valéry admits here his inability to define the true nature of pure poetry; after many definitions by negation and much dialectical reasoning, he gracefully leaves the stage to the poets, amongst whom he later reappears in his proper alphabetical turn.

From symbolism to surrealism is a far stretch and the poets put on a strange and varied show, perhaps because their turns are not properly heralded by biographical and critical introductions; perhaps, too, because the whole modern movement lacked unity. Several poets, generally considered great or important, such as Claudel, Cocteau, Jules Romains and Vié-
lé-

Griffin, the symbolist who was born in Virginia, are disappointing or disappointingly represented. Claudel is far less convincing than Péguy, whose despairing simplicity, humble resignation and medieval repetitiousness remind us of *Ash Wednesday* and Eliot's later litanies, though Péguy was killed in the last war, as early as 1914. Claudel indeed seems undisciplined, uncritical; his rhetorical exhibitionism has much in common with that of Cocteau. At the price of a thousand compromises, Cocteau brought modernism to the level of the night-club, Claudel to that of the nunnery.

Apollinaire, inventor of fanciful and tender elegies, of acrostics, word-pictures and conundrums with which he whiled away the horrors of the last war; Larbaud, with his sophisticated and internationalist nostalgia for hotel-grown potted palms, sleeping-cars and tourists' postcards; Mallarmé, of course, and Péguy, Valéry, Gide and Saint-John Perse; perhaps also Chennevière, subtle analyst of every-day emotions, Claudel, when he does not remind one too much of Tartuffe, Fargue who forgets to be truly vicious but remembers the sinner's self-pity, Eluard who expresses, in surrealist lyrics, the unconscious symbolism of Hegel and Freud, finally Supervielle, a child of the Uruguayan pampas who suffers, in a self-inflicted Parisian exile, a sort of poetic claustrophobia,—all these remain the stars of this anthology as of any in which they may ever appear. Each of these poets is highly specialized, offers little variety but has achieved a kind of beauty and perfection which can be found nowhere else and had never before been attempted.

On the whole, the anthology is excellent; and the *Nouvelle Revue Française* can be proud of having picked so many winners. Yet the old *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Française*,

published by the Editions du Sagittaire, still remains more representative of the many trends of modern French poetry. What, however, has this whole modern movement achieved? For nearly seventy years, French poets have now been free to write exactly as they please, to ignore all traditions of imitation and to invent almost at random. Today, if some choose to return to more classical forms and theories of poetry, it is a deliberate choice, no longer habit nor lack of imagination and originality. At last, a modern poet can be consciously traditional without facing the accusation of plagiarism and rhetoric; the Symbolists and Imagists had indeed, as the French critic Jean Paulhan remarked, established a sort of Reign of Terror during which no poet dared set words in any order which had been used before. *Transition's* "Revolution of the Word" is now over; a young poet can express his dissatisfaction with the exhausted tradition of post-romantic individualism only in a Thermidorian reaction towards more classical norms. And this, indeed, has already happened: the most gifted recent French poet, Patrice de la Tour du Pin, has astonished everybody by publishing poems which might easily have been written eighty years ago.

Edouard Rodivi

NEWS NOTES

AS a contrast to the point of view expressed in the statement by the editor of *Horizon* quoted here last month, we print the following excerpt from a letter by one of the younger English poets (not a contributor to this issue). At the time of writing, it fairly represented the attitude of some of his contemporaries.

"As a result of this war the position of the young poet has been made rather more difficult in this country than it was before, as papers have shut down and there are not many paying periodicals. I don't think that there will be many Rupert Brookes among the poets of my genera-

tion—a lot of them are objecting, including myself, on various moral grounds. I myself do not feel that I am justified in taking life, when life is the one thing worth caring about—and even though Nazism would mean the suppression of me and my kind, I cannot help feeling that a live Nazi is more civilized than a dead Tory, by the amount that he is alive; a live worm being more civilized than a dead lion. I don't expect that the tribunal will accept my reasons for objecting, and then the whole useless business of cat-and-mouse imprisonment will start and will continue until the end of the war, for I do not think that I will weaken under the strain. . . . The things this war is being fought for are proclaimed as the things I care for, yet these are the things that are being starved and neglected."

Two new literary magazines announce their imminent appearance, both, as it happens, to be published in Illinois. Those readers who were sorry to see the suspension of the interesting quarterly *Direction*, after two years of publication in 1934-5, will welcome its successor, *Accent*. Kerker Quinn again heads the editorial board. The first issue of *Accent*, which is to be a quarterly devoted to poetry, fiction, and criticism, is scheduled for September. Its address is Box 102, University Station, Urbana, Ill.

View: A Poetry Paper, edited by Charles Henri Ford with James A. Decker as managing editor, is promised for July 15th and will be published monthly at Prairie City, Ill. *View* plans to publish no poetry, but all contributions, which will include articles and news about poetry, music, the dance, theatre, cinema, travel, etc., will be by poets. Its scope will be international, its aim to present contemporary affairs as "viewed through the eyes of poets."

An Edwin Markham Memorial Association has been organized to preserve the Markham house on Staten Island and to keep it open for visitors, to arrange for observance of the poet's birthday in the nation's schools, and to publish a journal devoted to Markhamiana. Judson King, Honorary President, writes: "It is important that Edwin Markham's ideas on social regeneration should continue to exercise their force, especially in the fields of education and literature." The address is 301 Hart Avenue, Staten Island, N. Y., and the membership fee is one dollar.

The American Academy of Arts and Letters has received an anonymous gift of \$20,000, the income from which will be used as an annual prize for the recognition of outstanding work in painting, sculpture, the novel, poetry, drama. The award will be made in one of these fields each year, in that order.

Oscar Williams writes to protest that certain reviewers of his book, *The Man Coming Toward You*, have been too hasty in detecting the influence of advertising copy in his poetic style, and that we, too, were mistaken when we said recently in our contributors' notes that he wrote

"nothing but advertising" during his sojourn in business. The fact is that he never did write ad copy, and he would like this information to go on record. As W. H. Auden explained in his statement about Mr. Williams (which was quoted only in part on the jacket of the book): "Prompted perhaps by an instinct of self-preservation, he took care to let others write the copy and confined himself to financial organization."

Archibald MacLeish has made recordings of his long poems, *Conquistador* and *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City*, as talking books for the blind. They were made at the American Foundation for the Blind, 15 West 16th Street, New York City.

Alfred Kreymborg has received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation toward the writing of a book on poetic drama from the Greeks to our time.

We are glad to hear that the old Provincetown Playhouse, 133 Macdougall Street, New York, is to be reopened. It has been taken on a two-year lease by Hazele Harmon, formerly a director of the Pasadena Community Playhouse. New playwrights are invited to submit plays and to join the workshop.

Kensington Gardens in War-time, the collection of poems which Humbert Wolfe was preparing at the time of his death, has been issued in London by Heinemann.

One of our subscribers, Irwin C. Heyne, of 4524 Sansom Street, Philadelphia, writes: "For the past four years, my wife and I have set aside Tuesday evenings for the reading aloud of poetry and plays, ancient and modern. A few friends have joined us and have found our Tuesdays both pleasurable and profitable. In these days one needs more than ever something of this sort to maintain one's balance. I feel sure that there are a few Philadelphians who would like to join us, if we could reach them. There are no fees or dues connected with the group."

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

THOMAS WOOD STEVENS, now resident in Santa Fe, was formerly head of the Drama Department at Carnegie Tech and the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. He directed the Globe Shakespearean theatres in expositions, and is at present working on a drama for the Coronado Cuarto Centennial celebrations. He is the author of numerous plays and books on the theatre, and of a novel in verse, *Westward Under Vega* (Covici Friede, 1938).

ALFRED HAYES was born in London but has lived since childhood in New York City. He was introduced to our readers in 1936, and has contributed to various magazines. He was co-author with Leon Alexander of a dramatization of Erskine Caldwell's *Journeymen*.

EDITH FRANKLIN WYATT, the distinguished Chicago novelist and poet, has been a contributor to POETRY since its beginning.

HENRY RAGO is a young Chicago poet now doing graduate work at Notre Dame. He has contributed to POETRY, *The New Republic*, and other magazines.

JOHN CIARDI was born in Boston in 1916, attended Tufts College and the University of Michigan, and is at present on the faculty of the University of Kansas City. He has recently published a book of poems, *Homeward to America*.

MARGERY MANSFIELD, now living in Monterey, Mass., served for several years on the staff of POETRY and is the author of *Workers in Fire. A Book About Poetry*.

AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL, of New London, Conn., has been a contributor since 1920. She has published several books of poems, the most recent being *Cinnamon Saint*.

We have the pleasure of introducing four poets in this issue:

KENNETH GEE is a young English poet, a native of London, now living in Wallington, Surrey. He has contributed to *The New Statesman and Nation*, *The New English Weekly*, etc., and is the author of a book of short stories, *The Dead Can't Hurt You*.

PAUL GOODMAN, a native of New York City, is a young member of the English faculty at the University of Chicago, where he teaches criticism. He has written "a hundred plays and stories" and is now preparing a book of Noh-plays, *Five Acts of Awareness*.

EDWARD HORN is a native and resident of New York City. He attended Harvard and Columbia, and is now in business. The poems in this issue are his first published work.

PETER VIERECK, a young New York writer, was Founding Editor of *The Harvard Guardian*, has contributed poems and articles to magazines, and is at present working on a study of the origins of Nazi thinking, *Metapolitics: From Wagner to Hitler*, to be published by Knopf.

All but the first of this month's prose contributors have appeared previously:

LEO SHAPIRO was born in 1914, has majored in medieval comparative literature at the University of Chicago, and is now a member of the English faculty at De Paul University. LIONEL ABEL was introduced with a group of poems in the May issue. He is the author of a recent book of translations, *Some Poems of Rimbaud*, published by the Exiles' Press. GLADYS CAMPBELL is on the college faculty of the University of Chicago. WILLIAM SALE, JR. is a member of the English faculty at Cornell. EDOUARD RODITI is at present teaching in the University of California. M. JEAN PRUSSING is a young Chicago poet.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

- The Last Ditch*, by Louis MacNeice. Cuala Press, Dublin, Ireland.
Political Self-Portrait, by John Wheelwright. Bruce Humphries.
An American in Augustland, by Elliott Coleman. Univ. of No. Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.
A B C's, by Charles Henri Ford. James A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.
A Poet's Testament, by Paul Potts, with Foreword by Hugh MacDiarmid. Whitman Press, London, England
Collected Poems 1917-1939, by Edward Davison. Harper & Bros
Though Men May Pipe, by Mabel Hatton Marks. Saunders Press, Claremont, Calif.
The Voyage and Certain Songs, by T. St. Quentin Hill. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford
Cosmopolitan Dance, by Winthrop Bushnell Palmer. Fortuny's, New York.
Flight Without Fear, by Winthrop Bushnell Palmer. Fortuny's.
Fragile Hands, by Blanche Robinson Williams. Dietz Press, Richmond, Va.
Laugh While You Can, by Dorothy Quick. Loker Raley, New York City.
First Poems, by Cornel Lengyel. Pacifica Press, San Francisco.
The Private Room, by Basil Dee Vaerlen. Pacifica Press.
Señor Paco Does Not Return, by Miriam Crenshaw. J. F. Rowny Press, Santa Barbara, Calif.
Patter of Rain, by Cecile Houghton Stury. Priv. ptd., Pewaukee, Wis.

PROSE, ANTHOLOGIES, AND A PLAY:

- The Spiritual Aspects of the New Poetry*, by Amos N. Wilder. Harper & Bros.
Wartime Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by M. D. Herter Norton. W. W. Norton.
Ten Victorian Poets, by F. L. Lucas. Cambridge University Press
Calendar: An Anthology of 1940 Poetry, edited by Norman Macleod. James A. Decker.
Augury: An Oxford Miscellany of Verse and Prose, ed. by Alec M. Hardie and Keith C. Douglas. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, England.
The Blue Cape, by Marion Craig Wentworth. J. F. Rowny Press.

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MARTHA LEE (Book Reviewer)

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POETRY *for August* 1940



| | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----|
| Five Poems I-V | E. E. CUMMINGS | 233 |
| Two Poems | PAUL CLAUDEL | 240 |
| (Translated by Eugene Jolas) | | |
| Four Poems | WALTER DE LA MARE | 242 |
| • Things—Antiques—Lethe—Secret | | |
| Coming and Going of Storms | GENEVIEVE TAGGARD | 243 |
| When I Was Very Old | TROY GARRISON | 244 |
| Sunlight and Its Shadow — Christmas — Early Night — | | |
| Birth of My Anger | | |
| Mississippi | HERMAN SALINGER | 246 |
| The Tower of Desire | C. A. MILLSPAUGH | 247 |
| Death and the Maiden | NIGEL HESELTINE | 248 |
| Portraits I-III | CHRISTOPHER LA FARGE | 250 |
| Evening Ride | ROBERT FRANCIS | 253 |
| Four Poems | CARL H. GRABO | 254 |
| Sonnet—Mountain Shower—Spain—Folk Rhyme | | |
| From "Electra Hid An Axe" | C. F. MACINTYRE | 257 |
| Speaking of Iowa | JAMES HEARST | 260 |
| Morning Song—The Sun at Noon—False Warning— | | |
| After the Son Died—The Same in This as Other Lands | | |
| French Poetry and the Revival of Mysticism | EUGENE JOLAS | 264 |
| Reviews: | | |
| The Poet's Task | BABETTE DEUTSCH | 271 |
| A Mixed Bag | RICHARD EBERHART | 274 |
| Venus and Politics | HARRY ROSKOLENKO | 278 |
| Proving the Rule | MARGARET WALKER | 281 |
| In Memoriam | ELIZABETH CONNER LINDSAY | 282 |
| Swedish Festival | RUTH DART STEPHAN | 284 |
| Forward From Positivism | DAVID HAWKHURST WILSON | 285 |
| News Notes | | 288 |
| Notes on Contributors | | 291 |
| Books Received | | 292 |

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P O E T R Y

A M A G A Z I N E O F V E R S E

VOL. LVI

NO. V

AUGUST 1940

FIVE POEMS

I

anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he sang his didn't he danced his did.

Women and men (both little and small)
cared for anyone not at all
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same
sun moon stars rain

children guessed (but only a few
and down they forgot as up they grew
autumn winter spring summer)
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf
she laughed his joy she cried his grief
bird by snow and stir by still
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones
laughed their cryings and did their dance
(sleep wake hope and then) they
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon
(and only the snow can begin to explain
how children are apt to forget to remember
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)
busy folk buried them side by side
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep
and more by more they dream their sleep
noone and anyone earth by april
wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men (both dong and ding)
summer autumn winter spring
reaped their sowing and went their came
sun moon stars rain

II

you which could grin three smiles into a dead
house clutch between eyes emptiness toss one

at nobody shoulder and thick stickingly un

stride after glide massacre monday did
more) ask a lifelump buried by the star
nicked ends next among broken odds of yes
terday's tomorrow (than today can guess

or fears to dare whatever dares to fear)

i very humbly thank you which could grin
may stern particular Love surround your trite
how terrible selfhood with its hands and feet

(lift and may pitying Who from sharp soft worms

of spiraling why and out of black because
your absolute courage with its legs and arms

III

a pretty a day
(and every fades)
is here and away
(but born are maids
to flower an hour
in all,all)

o yes to flower
until so blithe
a doer a wooer
some limber and lithe
some very fine mower
a tall;tall

some jerry so very
(and nellie and fan)
some handsomest harry
(and sally and nan
they tremble and cower
so pale:pale)

for betty was born
to never say nay
but lucy could learn
and lily could pray
and fewer were shyer
than doll. doll

IV

i say no world

can hold a you
shall see the not
because
and why but
(who
stood within his steam be-
ginning and
began to sing all
here is hands machine no

good too quick i know this
suit you pay
a store too
much yes what
too much o much cheap
me i work i know i say i have
not any
never
no vacation here

is hands is work since i am
born is good
but there this cheap this suit too
quick no suit there every
-thing
nothing i

P O E T R Y: *A Magazine of Verse*

say the
world not fit
you) he is

not (i say the world
yes any world is much
too not quite big enough to
hold one tiny this with
time's
more than
most how
immeasurable
anguish

pregnant one fearless
one good yes
completely kind
mindheart one true one generous child-
man
-god one eager
souldoll one
unsellable not buyable alive
one i say human being) one
goldberger

V

If you can't eat you got to
smoke and we aint got
nothing to smoke: come on kid

let's go to sleep
if you can't smoke you got to

Sing and we aint got
nothing to sing; come on kid
let's go to sleep

if you can't sing you got to
die and we aint got

Nothing to die, come on kid

let's go to sleep
if you can't die you got to

dream and we aint got
nothing to dream (come on kid

Let's go to sleep)

E. E. Cummings

TWO POEMS

THE BLESSED LADY WHO LISTENS

In the church of my village of Brangues there is a chapel in the
chateau:

Because it's too warm outside, into its nave each day at five
o'clock I go.

A man can't keep on walking all the time, so he might as well
visit the Good Lord's House:

Outside the sun is blazing away, and the road screams across the
square as if it wanted the whole world to arouse.

But inside, the Holy Mother before me, for me, she is like a
glacier, so fresh and pure,

All white with her son in her lovely gown, all white, it's so long
I can see only the tips of her feet for sure.

Mary! Here is that fellow again, all overflowing with desire
and worrying:

Ah, I'll never have time enough to tell you everything.

But she, lowering her eyes, with a face tender and bland,

Looks at the words on my mouth like someone who listens and
gets ready to understand.

SOUVENIR

I remember that convent of women once upon a time, I think it
was in Rio de Janeiro,
And those fervent voices chanting and reciting the credo almost
quite low.
And that made me think of the desert, of the night of Bethle-
• hem, in its enormous black veil,
With that cassocked group of shepherds who ask each other and
tell each other many a tale;
One questions, the other answers, the young one lets the elder
speak, he does not tire.
There is sometimes a moment of silence, it's time to put wood
in the fire.
Thus the degree of our salvation and that road leading to heaven's
throne
Are told us humbly in a confidential tone.

Paul Claudel

(Translated by Eugene Jolas)

FOUR POEMS

THINGS

Things are the mind's mute looking-glass—
That vase of flowers, this work-box here,
When false love flattered me, alas,
Glowed with a beauty crystal clear.

Now they are hostile. The tulip's glow
Burns with the mockery of despair;
And when I open the box, I know
What kind of self awaits me there.

ANTIQUES

Those quaint old worn-out words!
Fashions in miniature:
Pious, amiable, reserved, serene,
Modest, sedate, demure!
Mental poke-bonnets,—and no less effete,
Why, even their meanings now are obsolete.

LETHE

Only the Blessed of Lethe's dew
May stoop to drink. And yet,
Were their Elysium mine to lose,
Could I, sans all repining, choose
Life's *sorrows* to forget?

SECRET

A hidden self rebels, its slumber broken;
Love, secret as crystal, forms in the spirit's womb;
The heart as faithfully beats, its vow unspoken;
All things to silence come.

Walter de la Mare

COMING AND GOING OF STORMS

All summer long, the young, the lonely wait
Events, delights. Summer builds
High its great thunder over a rainy gate,
Lightning emphatic pours the air with change,
Boxes the country room with swift, electric range.
Then deluge. But the lonely face
Looking behind the wavy pane lit once
Gets an evasive answer.

And the tumult ends.
Over Canada, far off, the serial climax forms.
Far off the canvas of the thunders crumple.
A mocking voice in every quarter says:
"It's silly. It's so simple.
Watch weather, frustrate sister,
Nothing ever happens here but storms."

Genevieve Taggard

WHEN I WAS VERY OLD

For M. and T.

SUNLIGHT AND ITS SHADOW

Our father handled bright tools and often walked
With great planks on his shoulder like teeter-totters;
And the wood he worked with was the color
Of healthy flesh, so that sometimes I almost cried aloud
To see it crucified. His tools also were beautiful:
The plane traveling along a plank like a miniature locomotive,
The saws that sunlight loved to shine on,
The level with its tube of liquid justice:
And he loved them all, for they were faithful friends and servants.

Sometimes I lay for hours in a crisp nest
Of sunwarmed shavings, and listened to his hammer's music;
And sometimes I dreamed that the home he was building was ours.

CHRISTMAS

It was warm expectant sleep and tinsel'd dreaming,
From which we woke in the icy tinkle of early hours;
It was heavy stockings and the tree
A-glitter with presents and new discovered joys.
Once it was red-topped boots, and a tin monkey
In a green jacket who scampered up a string;
And twice it was a shiny-varnished sled
With scarlet-painted runners and a name
I loved to think of, *Flexible Flyer*;

It was white streets and warmth in frosty cheeks
 And the proud displaying of toys.
 And sometimes it was none of these —
 But pain, and our mother weeping.

EARLY NIGHT

The dark was tender to the child,
 After the yellow despair of the house's lights
 And the strange splintered voices; and the car rocked
 In the swell of his imagination, which rose
 To wash the last hour's wreckage from his mind.

The night accepted him and hid no secrets from him,
 Knowing him to be no orphan, but her son
 And the kin of all things natural:
 The trees gossiped in his presence, their laughter
 As fresh as virgins', and the wind in their gypsy-brilliant skirts
 Betrayed their brunette beauties; and the wind himself
 Was a minstrel, ragged and worthless but merry—:
 The eyes of the child like squirrels
 Stored these nuts of pleasure,
 For he sensed that sorrow is a hibernation
 Made tolerable by food like this; he sensed
 That sorrow was the season . . .

The door of the house opened, unrolling a yellow carpet
 Down the steps, on which two men and a boy
 Descended toward the street; and the child's startled eyes
 Had gathered bitter food before he was aware—
 His brother en route to prison.

BIRTH OF MY ANGER

There was a winter when my mother's beauty burned
On icy pillows with its wick bent low;
And I remember laughter passing, unconcerned,
Along the sparkling pavement of the snow.

Troy Garrison

MISSISSIPPI

(Remembering Frederick Oakes Sylvester)

How hold a river under ribs of stone
or limn in chrome and clays its rest and roving?
Its moving maze too swift for swifter, loving
words to hymn its daze that drift alone?
To watch the wanderer while the color dries;
to round the word, hemming the heart a minute,
and while the minute slides, the color dies,
leaving so little of the river in it:

so little of the Mississippi, such
a faint light fading from the muddied mirror.
The living river slips its easy touch
and oozes past the watcher and the hearer.

Herman Salinger

THE TOWER OF DESIRE

Imprisoned in the terrible tower he
Saw the blue white mountains and the white blue sea
And in the mist an island that was green and smooth.
He dared not move
Such was his delight.
He knew El Greco and that boy
Who spoke in Galilee of joy
And saw in Babylon that naked queen.

His heart was savaged by historic cries,
And the blue white mountains and the white blue sea,
Transformed from color into passion, stormed the skies.
The cornered eye
Held a purple bird.
He saw Andromeda unchained
And Perseus, whom her body gained,
His avid mouth and hand against her breast.

So maddened by impounding stone, so crazed
By the blue white mountains and the white blue sea,
The wound of beauty in the brain, the loins afire,
His cries were phrased
By spirit and by flesh,
Became one word and that a choir
And sang his tower to smooth green ground,
Where clasped to Love's white body he in blue sea drowned.

C. A. Millspaugh

DEATH AND THE MAIDEN

Weight of doves on the four-walled dream
crumples the dying night: in the sore
scars of the stars fresh brass splinters
sprinkle a caracol.

Prowling sounds of figures of tongues
in the far barred meadow; thick
star blooms spattered like breath
in the near grass: so: flush with the wood.

Tongues of the sleeping birds tickling
the dirt frame; here the tough digger
touched with his spade shuts
down the sliding hours

When the tongue is fixed on the spot
of the pricking star, the hurt girl
limps on her blamed leg: he
tracks her warm spoor

She is navel to knee thigh
to thigh, scratched by sharp
spurs of sight, she bleeds
on her side

She is wet lip to bare side he
leans her lamp on his back
brings his ribs shadows in bars on her breasts

NIGEL HESELTINE

His bare teeth kiss her scratched flesh
folds of her bulge in his
ribs print his scarred hug in this bowl of her

This is her where she moans
in the fixed wood, the bald hour
gives her that cracking fist
fit to shine or to soar

She and hers, that was her
lipped charm, restart the creamed stars
thus far tongued doves
dive in the framed dream.

Nigel Heseltine

PORTRAITS

I

You pretty girl! How easily
You fooled him with that pretty face:
Although it's slightly commonplace
And like your mother's when annoyed.
Let's hope we shall not ever see
Because of it, more love destroyed.

Your strength was in your stubborn way;
Your way, like your rich house and dresses:
The house your lack of taste professes
In chosen suburbanity;
The dresses, smart both night and day,
Are apt as good profanity.

And now, with one collapsed balloon,
You've bought the helium to inflate
A cheaper that may dissipate—
Are you so sure it won't explode?
Your Steel Preferred, it rusted soon;
Won't Common Steel more soon corrode?

You mixed your heart up with your bed,
Threw half your children's lives away—
Now his, by her, with yours can play,
Since you have legalized the matter.
More little feet will someday tread
To make a more assorted patter?

Your wants were stronger than your pride,
For love upon itself was turned:
But all your bridges are not burned—
Love but yourself for every day,
You'll find ambition sweeps aside
All—but the final price to pay.

II

With long routine unwedded to your heart,
Your days are ruled and have been, and will be:
You must have wondered, once, when life would start,
And still be wondering, uncomplainingly.
Out of such matter you have wrought a man
Whose debts the inner man has always paid,
Bearing hard outward burdens as he can,
Facing his failures and yet unafraid.
Perfected artist whose little-known success
Must cut at moments like a dangerous knife,
What force denied the talents you possess,
Seeking release where should have been a life?
Where did you grow the gift to be a friend
When your true gift is starved and put aside:
From others' needs laid on you without end,
From humor, wisdom, or from simple pride?
I do not know: I see you now and then
Ill-dressed, self-educated, short, and bald—
Until, before the light you hide from men
And turn to duty, I stand amazed, appalled.

III

With long and patient wisdom in your life
You turned your years to a most simple way,
Becoming thus, good mother and good wife,
The gracious widow of a later day.
Neat, humorous, and kind, you could escape
From strict New England's narrowness of creed
And yet preserve the dignity of its shape,
The iron that prolongs its lasting breed.
Your gaiety must have pleased the God you vowed,
For He returned you courage in its stead
To give the happiness you long endowed,
The grace that clothed you on your final bed.
We knew you: thus we testify: we are young—
May this outlast the witness of our tongue.

Christopher La Farge

EVENING RIDE

The world lay still and clear like a long mural
And we who watched were all that moved and we
Could overlook that we ourselves were moving.

There was no wind to flaw the level sunlight
And the long shadows lying on the hills
And chimney smoke pale blue on deep blue air.

Three children by the roadside stopped their play
To gaze. A woman sewing on her porch
Paused with the lifted needle in her hand.

Two farmers with a load of hay half loaded
Stood with their pitchforks idle as we passed.
Even a dog looked and forgot to bark.

The road was always upward. Now it was day,
Now twilight, and now day again. Now warm,
Now cool. We felt the cool grow ever cooler.

Woodsmoke was in the air, late supper cooking,
Fragrance of newmown hay and ancient woods
And evening vines in sudden deep ravines.

We reached the summit but only after the sun
Had gone. The road beyond dipped down to darkness
While all the higher hills round us were bright.

Robert Francis

FOUR POEMS

SONNET

In crumbling texture of slow-weathering rocks,
In mountains worn with rhythmic sun and frost,
As in the stars' slow process time is lost,
And force unsentient our brief sentence mocks.
The restless mind finds no relief in those
Too ample cycles of decay and change,
Disclosing in the cosmic scale and range
No pause nor steadfast center of repose.

From timelessness unraveling in time,
Within whose coil no future is nor past,
The shaken soul seeks fortitude in rhyme,
Learning serenity from growing trees
And flowers which drink the sun and air, at last
To die absolved, having no ends but these.

MOUNTAIN SHOWER

The dove-like shadows of slow moving clouds
Drift over fields of snow,
Over the treeless meadows on the heights
Where mountain flowers grow.

From the green-wooded crevices of hills
 The ragged vapors stream;
Bright in the sunlight, on the broken crags
 The rain-wet boulders gleam.

Through aspen grove and pine, the birds
 Flutter on silent wing;
Over the needles of the forest floor
 Scampers some gray-furred thing.

And where, its tossing waters stilled, the brook
 Within its brown pool lies,
A doe and her twin dappled fawns look up
 With shy and lovely eyes.

SPAIN

Back to the wall, blindfolded eyes
That cannot see the rising sun,
Another boy for freedom dies,
Christ once again to death is done.

With him be peace. But this old tree
Bears scantlier now its crown of flowers,
And in the Autumn we shall see
More meagre fruit than once was ours.

FOLK RHYME

On an island in a well,
Where the world ends
And night with day blends,
So the fairy legends tell
Rests her heart where none may find;
Whether cruel, whether kind,
Safe from every magic spell.

Pain is teacher to the wise;
Hidden, hidden be the heart;
No unguarded glance impart
What is shielded by the eyes.
Secret heart no anguish knows;
Safely in its garden blows
The flower all men prize.

Carl H. Grabo

FROM "ELECTRA HID AN AXE"

PROLOGUE

[Argos: the palace of Agamemnon. His tomb is seen in the background. It is just before dawn.]

The Nurse of Orestes:

Let me begin, as it were, in the eye of the egg
when Zeus as a swan on the lush bank of Simois
gave curious Leda the bloody bane of Troy:
Helen, that portable brothel, who stuck swift horns
on the noble but thinning brows of Menelaus
who'd won her in a princely lottery.

How she was kidnapped—and willingly—is well-known
to everybody, even this audience
which lolls there on soft prats on rented cushions;
and what ships ploughed the muddy-muscat sea,
zigzagging to the shores of Pergamos—
after a bit of blood-letting in Aulis;
what heroes lost the stiffening of their knees,
the death-filled womb of the wooden horse, and the rest of it.

Nor are you inhabitants of this splendid city
illiterate. You ken the cunning scrolls
on which is scrawled the general's home-coming,
the little bath he took
and the bloody axe of his doom.

Much has been written, much
shall be written yet, for nothing
told in the words of men can
truly record the shrieks
and the crunch of the bronze on bone
and the people's lamentations,
or the mock-joy of the nuptials
that evil amorous pair,
Aegisthus and Clytemnestra,
has kept these seven years now
in this curse-stricken desolate country.

For the good queen, Agamemnon's faithful wife, had
warmed the nest for her absent lord with the beardless
paramour, cuckoo, amateur murderer, and tyrant
about town—that old she-goat, King Aegisthus.
Meanwhile, the legitimate heir, Orestes, forced
to exile, bites his knuckles against revenge.
Messengers sent to fetch him have not found him—
but these breasts that suckled him are fiercely aware
he lives yet and shall come, [Thunder off stage]
even in this eighth year of our misery.

Electra, the true daughter of her father,
smoulders, unmarried, hateful, hiding the axe
she is too weak to wield, for her brother's coming
Then, oh, then will the curse on the house be purged
and banished peace return, and all be well—
after a couple hours of poetic catharsis.

As for myself: you marvel why I'm here.
I am the wife of the watcher on the tower
who first saw the bright couriers of fire
that leaped with the sky-licking news of the fall of Troy.
I am the nurse of Orestes and Electra,
the careful widow of my husband's craft
who closely am aware of what is and what shall be.

Now I've got to be off and start the milking.
That is my fate and my business: milk the goats—
although no babies bless this unholy palace.
Not even the harlot daughters of Troy, the slaves, bring
forth on these sterile rocks.

But it's "Milk for Aegisthus!" (Who's in his second childhood.)
And I must up and scuttle before dawn
to ease the heavy ninnies of the nannies.

[Exit]

C. F. MacIntyre

SPEAKING OF IOWA

MORNING SONG

I often think of night as a wave lifting me into the morning
where the light pours as softly as snow through the clear glass
and birds raise sleepy off-beat notes like birds learning
their first songs and mist blows white across the grass.

No time of day is so full of hope as the new morning
when green stalks are crisp with life and the clover shines
under its sheet of cool dew like a lake and turning
clouds of fog lift from a world refreshed and renewed in its signs.

The lover and the loved find strength and peace in the morning
as they seem to hold time motionless a fruit without decay
and remember the swift pulse of desire in the love warning
the passion of a cock pheasant crying in the day.

THE SUN AT NOON

No country leads so softly to nowhere
as those slow shoulders that curtain the horizon
let us hold the sun at noon in this valley
for morning will not come again.
We will watch the trees grow up and the flowers stiffen
and brightly dressed desires
fade like women we have missed
no, morning will not come again
but here at noon I stand above my shadow
and balance on time's edge—

where is Joshua among us?
my shadow is below me and I stand in the light.

Sweet sweet the night
not now spent sleeping
my love, I have been too long away
this is the sun at noon hanging in his arc
- and morning past,
your breasts are like morning glory trumpets,
this moment could live forever,
life full blown and the wheat ripening
let us draw the hills around our house
and kneel in the dust.

The morning dew has dried and the last seed planted
stretch up your arm, Prophet, and bid the sun stand still
on this peak of light I rise and pass my shadow
on this peak of light I lay the morning down.
The compass draws its slow degrees toward the yellow west
and wisdom the white road follows its slow decline
but on this peak of light I rise and pass my shadow.

FALSE WARNING

The meadow has lost its features and the grove
up to its knees in drifts is strangely still
after a season of seeing the fox squirrels shove
nuts in the leaf mould, after hearing the shrill
and bawdy japes of the jays, for a shroud of snow
like fire or flood or sudden desolate grief

has covered away the face of the land I know
under a mask as polar as unbelief.

Not that courage is ready to take to the trees
nor the spirit retreat under a milk white fog
knowing the trend of the seasons I know that these
thoughts will be scattered like beetles after the log
roofing their tunnels has rolled away, when the sun
say some day late in March when the buds are awake
and the maple sap is past the peak of its run
has filled the grove with creeks and the field with a lake.

But if this sheet of frost should fall on a man
and freeze him deep after his sun has run down
and leave him spinning in space too far for the span
of love's straining fingers to reach and be swiftly blown
out of his township done with his crops and their yield,
people like me would feel the false in the warning
by watching our neighbor tracking across the field
to see what the world is like on a winter morning.

AFTER THE SON DIED

The trees follow two sides of a square
and make a fine windbreak
in this snug corner
apple trees mount the earth and sift their petals
over the stone foundation
over a pile of measured stone
where no house stands
these are just the roots of a house

but there is no growth
here is a background for living
and no life but these trees
and the rabbits who sprout from the stones
like furry ghosts
no dream even stands here on this foundation
for the dream went under another stone
and a rented house in town is good enough now

THE SAME IN THIS AS OTHER LANDS

He bows his head against the wind
that dries the muscles of his hands
and chills the poor and needy folk
the same in this as other lands.

Mud and the litter on his boots
witness the chores that he has done,
how many stables has he cleaned
and never owned a part of one?

His helpless eyes watch time unfold
vague leaves of promise everywhere
that are not written in his tongue
though he is often mentioned there.

The same in this as other lands
he grinds his labor for our bread
working the daily miracle
by which the multitude is fed.

James Hearst

FRENCH POETRY AND THE REVIVAL OF MYSTICISM

WHEN the new war broke out, French poetry was just going towards a rebirth of mystic thinking, towards the recognition of the spiritual and transcendental as the essence of the creative. In the exuberance of the poetic activity which marked lyric expression during the past few years, the great majority of writers were preoccupied with the problem of verbalizing their superrational experiences. They were against the *jeu gratuit* and against the nihilism of word-acrobatics. They were against the materialistic philosophy of life and attempted a metaphysical reconstruction.

Surrealism was dying. The movement that had given its name to the collective nostalgia for the fabulous and the oneir-romantic tendencies between the two wars was drifting towards politics. It no longer had anything to say to the new generation. It had done its duty and had liberated the imagination. After fifteen years of heroic battles, it conquered the Anglo-American and Latin-American youth, but in France it was no longer of any importance. It did not correspond to the vital needs of the generation that was living under the incessant threat of totalitarian aggression and that was now beginning to rebuild the bridge with the Gothic tradition of France. Surrealism refused to face the problem of ontology and thus ended in macabre impotence.

In the spring of 1939 a new movement appeared under the name of Vitalism. It expressed itself in vigorous manifestoes, but the new war prevented its creative emergence. Marcel Sauvage, its leader, in the *Premier Manifeste* (René Debresse) made a frontal attack on surrealism and demanded a return to sanity and a cosmic consciousness. Another movement, Populism, under

the aegis of René Menard and Pierre Bathille, demanded that poetry should "express the real conditions of the human presence." They wanted the poet to depict the lives of the average man. *Unanimité* continued with the publication of Jules Romains' *l'Homme Blanc*, a half lyric, half epic rhapsody of man's migration towards the Universal Republic. Paul Valéry read a *Cours de Poétique* before the Institut which gave a clear picture of his idea of *concentration* in the creative process. Léon-Paul Fargue, in his *Piéton de Paris*, continued his brilliantly paradoxical word-inventions. Jules Supervielle, the bilingual poet, presented his pantheistic vision in poems that appeared in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Jean Cocteau returned to poetry after a long silence by publishing a tortured poem following the Czecho-Slovakian crisis in which he expressed his deep concern with the events.

But the outstanding fact in modern French poetry seemed to be a return to the spiritual consciousness. The transcendental theme was taken up again. An attempt was made to sublimate existential anguish, to conquer nihilistic fear. There was a return to the human personality and its metaphysical possibilities for expansion. The abstract cliché was being combated. The poets demanded a new sense of *liturgy, ritual, consecration*. It was not a nebulous mysticism they advocated, but one that had its roots in life and in the awareness of a higher reality.

Behind this movement we may detect the influence of the late Charles Péguy, the late Léon Bloy, and the poet-ambassador Paul Claudel. Péguy, who died heroically in the First Battle of the Marne in 1914, edited before the war the famous *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, in which he introduced the work of Claudel, Romain Rolland and others, and published his own astonishing poems and prose-texts. A native of Orléans, he was a typographer, pub-

lisher, bookseller, and editor. His vision of a mystic kind of socialism based on a Catholic feeling for life and on a sense of French peasant tradition is now once more being taken up by the younger groups. Shortly before the war Armand Petitjean was preparing the revival of the *Cahiers* to continue Péguy's ideas. In his own poems, Péguy introduced a vigorous new style, half liturgical, half colloquial, which emphasized an incantatory emotion through the repetitive formula found in the Laurentian litaný.

Léon Bloy, whose apocalyptic novels and pamphlets never had any success in his lifetime (he died in 1916), is now coming at long last into his own. He is read by the young poets, and exegetical books, such as Stanislas Fumet's *La Mission de Léon Bloy*, and others, are being published. He wrote *Le Désespéré*, *La Femme Pauvre*, marked by a vigorous style and a genius for invective, and prepared the ground for the present mystic renaissance.

Paul Claudel, doubtless one of France's greatest poets, continues, at the age of seventy, the construction of his "cathédrale aux multiples nefs, jaillie du terroir français," as Louis Chaigne says. His immense work, poems and plays, in which the visionary element is welded with a sense of the ancestral loam, has a liturgical grandeur with supernatural intimations. His oratorio, *Jeanne au Bûcher*, set to music by Honegger, was performed in Paris last summer, and confirmed his power.

Another Catholic poet, Francis Jammes, who died early in the year at the age of seventy, once converted by Claudel, made a profound impression when he returned to Paris after an absence of many years. He was the poet of light and love. A romantic rusticism bathed his work, and the simplicity of his style expressed the spiritual grandeur of France.

A great deal of laboratory work was being done quietly by various theological and philosophical groups associated with monastic organizations. The anti-clerical laws of 1911 were no longer applied, with the result that the cloistral life was resuscitated after the first World War. These groups published bulky reviews to which they invited writers of every shade of opinion. The *Etudes Carmélitaines* devoted recently an exhaustive analysis to the "mystic night" of St. John of the Cross. Neo-Thomist studies under the aegis of Jacques Maritain attracted enormous audiences. Metaphysicians like Gabriel Marcel and Charles du Bos (who died a few weeks before the war) wrote with dialectical skill. A popularization of all these ideas was attempted by a weekly newspaper *Temps Présent*, which also introduced many new poets, and which, under the direction of Stanislas Fumet and François Mauriac, announced on its masthead: *La Paix par le Christ*. It is significant that during the Spanish Civil War this newspaper was aggressively on the side of the Spanish Republic, and defended its viewpoint against the Catholic rightists.

The recent publication of *Anthologie de la Renaissance Catholique*, by Louis Chaigne, a collection of modern Catholic poetry, is symptomatic of the growing interest in the mystic reconstruction. "This book comes at the right time," said Paul Claudel in his introduction "It emphasizes one of the most important literary revolutions of which our country has been the stage. . . . Our generation knew the last poems of Victor Hugo, the pompous blasphemies of Leconte de Lisle, the twitterings of Anatole France, that canary-bird of the libraries. . . . The isolated protests of a Lamartine, a Baudelaire, a Verlaine, were strangled in the tumult of politics,⁴ in opium dreams and in the hiccups of debauch." Chaigne's anthology contains, along with a certain

amount of minor verse, a great many first-class poems by Péguy, Claudel, Léon Cathlin, André Mithouard, Henry Ghéon, Max Jacob, Francis Jammes, François Mauriac, Patrice de la Tour du Pin.

The latter poet is undoubtedly the most promising among the new Catholic poets today. Patrice de la Tour du Pin, of French-Irish descent, was born in 1911. He has been at work for some years on a long-range poem which he explains in his recently published *La Vie Recluse en Poésie*, in which he expresses his debt to Rainer Maria Rilke, and presents the esoteric symbolism of his projected *Somme*. He wanted to tend "towards a reunion of all the chants that come from man and go towards a different pleasure." He announced: "The living in poetry attains its perfection when it becomes the living pole of man." He tries to reveal "the joy in God." He also says: "The state of poetry is not a feverish quavering—it is not the miracle of a moment." His *Psaumes*, the last fragment from his vast poem in progress, published in 1939, enlarges the image of a major poet.

The death in the spring of 1939 of O. V. de L. Milosz deprived French poetry of one of its finest mystic representatives. Milosz, although born in Lithuania, has lived all his life in France and wrote exclusively in French. He belongs in the tradition of the poets given to the areopagite vision and expressing the "disquiet of the mystery." His collected poems published shortly before his death give the impression of an artist of the mystic word who always walked alone.

Pierre-Jean Jouve, a tortured metaphysical poet, was beginning to publish a grandiose series of apocalyptic poems when the war broke out. Since his *Sueur de Sang*, he has consistently attempted to wed mysticism with modern psychology, and in his *Cavaliers*

d'Apocalypse he hurls thunder-words against our distracted age.

André Suarez, in his *Rêves de l'Ombre*, presents to us an orphic creation, a Heraclitean *dynamis* of a strange symbolism. He shows the inner drama of "Satan defying God." His form is more Anglo-Saxon than French. But the concluding parable of Shir Naga could only have been written by a French poet.

A great number of little magazines appeared during the last few years devoting themselves to encouraging the present mystic reconstruction. Under the direction of P. L. Flouquet, *La Revue des Poètes Catholiques*, published in Brussels, attempted to bring together in the original French, or in translation, the work of Catholic poets from Europe and America. Another significant group that had its birth in Belgium gathered around the review *Hermès*, under the direction of B. Groethuysen. They have been especially active in translating into modern French such medieval mystics as Master Eckhart, Van Roesbroeck and others. There were also a number of *revues des jeunes* that had no affiliation with Catholic dogmatism. The best known, I believe, is *Yggdrasill*, edited by Guy Lavaud and Raymond Schwab, which published *seriatim* Paul Valéry's *Cours de Poétique*.

There were other reviews: *Les Nouvelles Lettres*, edited by Jean Le Louet, which published poems and critical essays dealing with the relationship of mysticism to poetry; *Mesures*, edited by Henry Church, which, besides publishing poems by Léon-Paul Fargue and Henry Michaux, presented excellent translations of mystic and hermetic writers from various languages; *Le Goéland*, edited by Théophile Briant in a village on the Brittany coast, which is militantly Armorican, and publishes mostly Celtic poets in an ambience of esotericism; *Volontés*, where Georges Pelorson, Camille Schuwer, Raymond Queneau, Henry Miller and

the present writer were trying to find a unifying spirit in a "volonté de grandeur" and in which a recent inquiry answered by thirty French writers of various political and literary creeds evoked the possible existence of "directors of conscience in the occident."

On the critical-esthetic front there was a vigorous effort to develop a new metaphysics of poetry. Marcel de Corte, Rolland de Renéville, Raïssa and Jacques Maritain, and many others, were attempting to explore the inner processes of the operations inherent in the creative process. Jacques Maritain (in *Situation de la Poésie*) tried to situate poetry in time as well as in the structure of the spirit. He and his wife tried to present the *essence* and the *existence* of poetry, and explained the nature of poetical cognition. Poetry, they said, wants to reach the Absolute. It is a trans-subjective experience.

Rolland de Renéville, in his *Expérience poétique*, explained the difference between the fields of consciousness as shown in the surrealist method of *automatic inspiration* and Paul Valéry's method of *concentration*. He showed that the results in both cases were identical. He studied the "sense of the night," citing as witnesses Novalis, de Nerval, Baudelaire and Mallarmé. In the final chapter he compared poets and mystics and found that there was only a difference of nuances between the two. The poet, he showed, wants to move silence by sounds, while the mystic draws attention to the silence which begins after the sounds have vanished.

Marcel de Corte, also dealing with the poetical experience, regards the lyric creation as a transcendental activity of the spirit. He makes a vigorous attack on philosophical idealism. He insists on the "interexistential participation." He regards poetry "as the

archetype of all experience in existing." On the whole, his ideas join those of Jacques Maritain.

I would not be surprised to see these various currents of metaphysical groping in poetry grow into a tidal wave during the new war before very long. All of it ties back to certain earlier movements: Huysmans, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Péguy, Bloy, Claudel; to certain tendencies that hovered on the periphery of symbolism, (which, in turn, goes back to the transcendentalist phase of romanticism); an ancient emotion of France, deeply rooted in her peasantry, partly Gothic, partly simply liturgical, and re-emerging during the sufferings of the war in the deep layers of her unconscious.

Eugene Jolas

REVIEWS

THE POET'S TASK

Wartime Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, 1914-1921, translated by M. D. Herter-Norton. W. W. Norton & Company.

THESE letters, written during the first World War and the three years following it, have a significance for us just now that cannot be exaggerated. It is not merely because they present, with a sensitiveness and a penetration of which Rilke alone was capable, his reaction to wholesale death, not because they force upon us that tragic confrontation the acknowledgment of which distinguishes men from mice and moles. It is also because, in the midst of this death, in the face of this tragedy, Rilke could sincerely affirm his belief in the poet's task, the essentially human task, of realizing the inner and the outer world, their conflicts and their correspondences, of achieving, under whatever hindering

circumstances, a deeper, more generous awareness, of maintaining, in the midst of unprecedented destruction, his integrity.

The little book is crammed with passages which read as though they had been set down not a quarter of a century, but a quarter of an hour ago. As early as July 5, 1917 he could write what we must feel acutely today: "What is the use of anything that makes sense, if, contrary to all sense, a universal bewilderment was prepared for us?" Equally valid now are these words penned in Munich in 1915: ". . . lies by the hundred have put facts by the thousand into the world, and now the grandeur, the sacrifice, the resolution, that is continually happening, is tied in to the welter of misery and untruth . . ." Of Munich itself he writes prophetically just after the overthrow of the Soviet Republic there: "from now on innocent Munich may continue to be a bad and uneasy spot . . ." Perhaps the most important words he has to say are these, the meaning of which has gained an emphasis in 1940 that it did not have in 1917: ". . . every day the war still lasts increases the obligation of humanity towards a better-intentioned common future, for what could be more productive of obligation than the suffering augmented beyond all measure, which must after all join millions of people in all countries more closely together." But Rilke had no illusions about an imposed peace. He understood that the good things come from within, whatever help they must have from without: "To lay a peace egg won't help as nobody wants to hatch it; one must be able to bring forth a lively young peace out of oneself—unfortunately that means still more than nine months' gestation and under conditions of the most uneasy and dangerous pregnancy." Incidentally, not the least interesting aspect of these letters is the occasional flash of wit, the unexpected irony bred

in hours of bitterness and despair.

But it is not the hopelessness of our situation that these fertile pages make most present to us. Without minimizing for a moment the difficulty of our task, Rilke insists upon the necessity for securing and enriching the inner life, and so working, though with the slowness of Nature, toward the great change that the revolutionary, with understandable impatience, would bring about too hastily. He is himself impatient. He longs for a storm that would destroy all that is decaying and ruinously obstructive. But he knows that the storm may at the same time kill the weak beginnings of new life. A letter written in August, 1919, after he had witnessed the political upheavals in Bavaria, makes his position plain: "Strictly speaking, the unswerving intellectual could side with neither party in this chaotically confused struggle . . . neither with those who drove ruthlessly ahead nor with those who met the often criminal outbreaks of this insanity with old and no less unjust and inhuman means: the future lay with neither, and to *it* the intellectual is after all allied and sworn . . ."

There are many fine things here, insights into human relations, instructive comment on the arts, on those artists whom he knew best, and on his own work, sharp glimpses of places and people, an illuminating talk about religion. The heart of these letters remains the sensitive, wise heart of Rilke himself, struggling with its tragic burden, waiting upon the poet's vision, profoundly alive to the great and terrible reality that he felt it his duty to comprehend and respond to more fully, eventually to recreate, and thereby to enrich.

Babette Deutsch

A MIXED BAG

Poems, by Glyn Jones. The Fortune Press, London.

Poems, by Roy Fuller. The Fortune Press.

38 *Poems*, by Henry Treece. The Fortune Press.

These relatively recent and fresh figures on the English poetical scene do not invite generalizations on the direction of new English poetry. They allow no school, and show separate independence of outlook. Certainly they have no originality in their titles. Variety is the touchstone. Each has his own individual distinction.

Glyn Jones is the most traditional in tone of the three. He is a sincere man. In six pages of prose paragraphs at the end of the book he explains the development of his ideas. The Perfect Audience for a poet: himself, "an image of himself endlessly duplicated," "as he stands at a certain angle in the mirror-maze" A Good Poem: "I see writers today praised for being catholics, or socialists, or contemporary men, or for being killed in Spain, rather than for being poets."

Literary Biography. "I started off powerfully under the influence of D. H. Lawrence" (about 1931). From this "derivative verse in that early uprush of expression," Workers' Poetry. "My ambition when I began to tire of reproducing endlessly the effects of another man's verse, was to achieve a body of workers' poetry. By this I didn't mean at all an imitation of the public-school-communist verse which was fashionable at the time and which used to amuse me by its naive earnestness and its exotic air when viewed from the standpoint of working class life and institutions, but rather poems which the workers themselves could read, understand and appreciate—And when I thought of the workers I visualized a certain unemployed collier, and a middle-

aged engine-driver, and a certain group of coal-trimmers I used to meet coming home along the dock railways." A Failure: "But the workers work eight hours, have had a three R's education, and care nothing for poetry." Then Jones tells of a new start after he had met "a famous young poet, a countryman of mine." But then he tells of a return to the "mirror-maze": "Now my poetry was less ambitious—I was content to communicate with myself," and how he built his poems, each of which has a Welsh place-name appended.

Jones can be delicate, as in

I hear my heart speak to the bleaky sky,
Coal and the valleys were my lucky egg,
As though some bird should scribble his short song—
I feel the mobbing flowers hug my feet.

and he can be effectively complex, as in *Choirs*:

Their first song soft and sand-flow smooth—my blood
Broke into antish uproar, my tight throat locked
Hearing that black-and-white-sexed, fanshaped, choir—
Keyboard keening the sweet Handelian act.

.

Remembering the precious flesh, hymning
That honeyed hooey, those bloodshot fairy-tales,
I scare my blessings up with rugged lungs like geese
Behind some honking king-goose over Wales.

Roy Fuller sounds nearest to recent thunder:

My tragedy is my power of prophecy,
Learnt from those men I love
Vainly, like you, but with the despairing same
Knowledge of our deathless progeny,
From common graves and prisons rising,
Where our thin blood has written history.

There is considerable torture, but the verse in good part is plain and speaks out. Anyone interested in the recrudescence of the ballad form must read *Ballad of the Last Heir*, certainly one of the

most skillful of recent works in the type, a poem full of subtleties, an ambitious poem, topheavy with peculiarity. But perhaps for the most part the verse is complex, as in *XVI* or *XVII*, generally contorted with unresolved struggle, and deserves quotation of a plain song, which will also show an element of imitation in Fuller. The book as a whole lacks unity, but repays study in its "tongued orchids and soft ceruminous roses," its "long travels in pursuit of tense," its "poet dead by green enormous sculpture."

O to be simple and give the salute,
To be hopeful and happy,
For life to be sucked through the root
And the branches sappy.

Oh to be mad with marching and May,
To be bold, to be brutish,
To dream in the night and by day
To delight in duties.

And oh for the pointing finger to cube
To a gun and the feeling
Inside to come out from the tube
And kill with its healing,

The earth to be gone with its grave and the sky
With its season. forever
To shake in god's voice and to lie
Next his iron and leather.

Henry Treece is, of the three poets, the one least controlled by contemporary events, most exercised by the technical possibilities of poetry. He is more artful than Jones and less immediately persuasive than Fuller. A number of the poems are written in a fourteen-line unrhymed form. His poems intrigue by their tricks of form, their bizarre notions, their "see-saw on dying." One recalls Beddoes, if not Benlowes, a macabre favor to Treece. But there are Hopkins echoes not heard so willingly.

These poems are densely packed and intricately shaped; they

are studies in compression, and in excavations of meaning from strange juxtapositions; they show a skill in tonal modulation, they demand close and continued reading, and they do not give up the poet's totality easily. This weight of experimentation, however, would cause some to prefer the relative simplicity of Jones, or the nearer approach to supposed reality of Fuller; it might require some to consider these poems as finger-exercises, not perfected poems. *The Seasons* and *Emperor Zero on Death* both depict the inventive Treece. I choose the latter as the less "literary," and because it shows points I have indicated, as well as suggesting others:

Where lies the truth I touted years for, I,
Emperor Zero, slain between altar and sanctuary?
My golden blood, lacing the marble steps,
Blinks in the sun, creeps between crevices
To find in rats' remains a lovelier lie
Than that it flowed for first. Sweet 'pothecary
Civet and centaury held in full-thighed laps,
The paps, the lips and all the queenly faces

Bred in our own or other's time are naught,
Truth's sweetness, so-called, naught beside this peace.
Yet I have hated death, and feared him too,
Figured him out to be the mean old man
Whose bomb caught ladies taking off their skirt,
Shore between lovers locked beneath the sheets;
Who left men speechless; like the mindless snow,
Built barricades between your home and mine.

But now I know him, know that his pictured pain
Is only paper-talk; the left he swings is fake;
Being forgotten's just the only hell.
Death, when you've once smacked off his witless face,
Is no more than a wet page in the rain,
The midnight noise that empty rooms may make,
Or silence screaming from a horned sea-shell.
So, leave this truth stuff, boys, and walk right in!

Richard Eberhart

VENUS AND POLITICS

Mirrors of Venus: A Novel in Sonnets, by John Wheelwright.

Bruce Humphries,

Political Self-Portrait, by John Wheelwright. Bruce Humphries.

Wheelwright is this, that, the other thing! So we are greeted by the cover jacket on his most recent book, *Political Self-Portrait*. He is called hag-ridden, exhibitionist, skillful, dignified like a Greek, a leader of a revolutionary school; it is further stated that he has no ear and that his language is bald. Some make of him a mystic; others are satisfied that he comes from New England—and that almost as an accusation! Doubtless to them he stems from a vast literary domain—and whereas the fruits of that liberal sector now lavishly adorn our cultural map, Wheelwright, the insidious, the Socialist, offers no edible quantity to those who labor not but eat. Call a man a hundred names and one or twenty will fit him—but how well, is a matter for an X-ray to determine. He seems a poet, for he infuses and infuriates. He is skillful, for he is called a heretic. In brief, he claims attention for his Christian attitude as well as for his Marxist politics; and both, fused into his poetry, easily run riot with the critical fanciers of the *laissez-faire* in verse.

Mirrors of Venus, written between the years 1914-38, represents to the author a technical and spiritual dichotomy of Selfhood and Eternal Solidarity. This volume has an eccentric frame of referrals, marginal enumerations for the rhyme schemes, and the pages on the left side carry punctuated prose explanations of the sonnets on the right side. Individually, and not in the concentric pattern that Wheelwright believes these poems fall into, they are excellent throwbacks to the Siegfried Sassoon of the *Counter Attack* years; others are not sonnets at all by any

wrench of the imagination, nor do they represent a continued sequence except as an afterthought; for the threads are collated by a desire to make a harmonious experience of something that is divided by its own technique and time.

Political Self-Portrait represents a variety of objective self-immersion. Into the emotional sea of our conscious cultural and political habits, Wheelwright grafts his hard (too often not floatable) portraits of friends and intellectuals, enemies and thinkers; here the hand, there the pointed finger. It is a fascinating outlet for a poet; a political expurgata no less of praise and prayer—of fact and dubious enchantment. Above it hangs the allegory, the scholarly sources of theological experience, selected for the connotation as well as for the political justice of the moment.

His new book is addressed to and about people in politics, people within a circumscribed orbit of action and esthetics. The twenty-six portraits range from Harold Laski, at odd times of the Stalin variety of political experience, to Leon Trotsky, the opposition to that variety in all of its submersive facets.

From *Peccatum Originale*, dedicated to Harold Laski:

More sad than lost and unrecoverable loves
prophecies grow feckless because half-fulfilled.
Turn, turn unperturbably, turn West.
Pity would-be patchers of Roman liberty
who, fed with laborers' word-giving bread
do not give back bread-giving words to men.
They're, all of them, dull to drumming wings in desert
caves where prophets gather answers against kings
and whither opinionated wills retreat, to woo
the advance of freedom's phoenix paraclete
whose ashen flaming throat cries, "Yes!" cries, "No!"

This is in essence a polemic, which by its intense method of association with Saints of a past Revolution, often becomes em-

barrassing (the revolt against heroes). And this apostrophe to Leon Trotsky will gain Wheelwright many blessed thorns and quotations for future cover blurbs:

Prototypal Christ, pre-crucified
pushing the invisible
advance upon our pushes upon chaos.
Discoverer and inventor, never let 'em say:
"Human nature cannot change."
Institutor of fire's Sacrament
and outward forms of conscious inner will;
Prometheus!
Forethought of freedom (freedom
for her and him; concrete, in that and this)
Titan, tortured by the tyrant vulture
whom Vulcan riveted as firmly as machines
can rivet laborers to capital;
Prometheus!
O, let it never be said that the human of nature cannot
change. Saul changed to Paul. All saints change
man's nature, as men change nature's change.

The Marxist dialectic, no less! the revolutionary canon of the saints of economic Father, Son, Holy Ghost; and with Wheelwright, it is the Act, the Word, the Change—a trinity no less ritualistic, though lifted from nature and the church to become a Revolutionary (Marxist) method.

The militant degree with which Wheelwright uses this formula of Christian to Marxist epistemological varieties is further illustrated in the poem *The Word Is Deed*, addressed to Kenneth Burke:

In our Beginning our Word
"Make a tool to make a tool"
distinguished man from Brute.
(Men who dance know what was done.)
Good and Evil took root
in this, the cause of Destinies
whence every Revolution rose and stirred.

Of course, it is nobly sectarian. And, if anything, this book is

the complete opposite of Eliot's church and politics; for it is to the accomplished Deed that Wheelwright gives his strange allegiance and his stranger art.

Harry Roskolenko

PROVING THE RULE

Each to the Other: A Novel in Verse, by Christopher La Farge.
Coward McCann, Inc.

This is the second experimental novel in verse by Christopher La Farge, who proves that a modern narrative can be successfully written in verse form. It is essentially a love poem, for the most part without sentimentality or melodrama. Mr. La Farge has shown a sound understanding of the delicacy of his material, and has resisted the temptation to indulge in rhapsodic passages. His metrical patterns are skillfully varied, so that the reading of the seventy-five episodes does not become tiresome; even the narrative passages of blank verse are never prosaic. Poetry serves a definite purpose here, heightening and intensifying the various effects of the novel, as well as maintaining unity by the use of leit-motifs running through the lyrical passages. A sonnet prefaces each chapter, serving as a thematic introduction. The dramatic dialogues are remarkable for their naturalness and simplicity, two qualities which the author manages to preserve without loss of poetic force.

At the same time he has carefully considered plot, characterization, suspense, and drama in his subject matter, and has thus created an absorbing novel. Despite his realistic handling of murder, insanity, and illicit love affairs, the story reaches an idealistic and slightly romantic climax in a happy marriage, which the author seems quite anxious to make convincing. If this is an

attempt at popular appeal, it may be forgiven in view of the memorable passage about Evelyn at the dinner party, the description of the wedding and honeymoon of Tom and Judith, and the excellent conversation between Tom and his grandfather.

Margaret Walker

IN MEMORIAM

Echoes, by Helen Burwell Chapin. The Gillick Press, Berkeley, Calif.

This slender volume bears special significance in a day which perforce has blinded us to the spiritual beauty of historical Japan. Here is tribute to the soul of a people; its devotion to art, its discipline of faith, its paradoxical quality of delicacy and intensity. Both tenderness and violence find respective expression in the two outstanding Kwannons, the Fukukensaku Kwannon of the Hokkedo,

Fisher of Souls and Hound of Heaven
Cowboy divine, holding the lasso
That never fails. . .

and in her opposite, the "formal image" of the Chuguji Kwannon of the seventh century:

Deceptive and beautiful
The wood gleams black
like bronze
Shines smooth like snake-skin.

Even more explicitly is the riddling paradox stated in the brief narrative of *Kishimojin, Mother of the Demon Children*:

Ogress and fiend, devourer of helpless babes
The seed of Buddhahood lay in your mother-love
For the youngest of your brood,
Five hundred strong.
The Buddha, seeing in your heart the mirror of his mind
Master of skillful means,

Stole your boy and hid him in His begging bowl
Till you should come for him.
Thus he converted you,
Making you patroness of mothers
As comely now as once you ugly were—
Your children, too, have lost their demon faces—
Our Lady of the Pomegranate.

The free verse form used throughout is reminiscent of the highly compressed imagist forms of Japanese poetry. It has a classic and almost inscriptional quality: words well fitted to the paintings, the carvings, the temple dances, the varied beauty of landscape and architecture once known and long remembered. One does not look for profound historical, theological, or economic content in so unpretentious a collection of verses as this, and yet there is here a true linking of the old and new Japan, of West and East, and of the inner heart of Buddhism with terms and references which illuminate truth for the "West-goer."

Recently in *Leaves*, a journal of East and West published at Mills College, California, Miss Chapin has demonstrated her finesse and scholarly achievement as a translator of Chinese verse. In this volume she welds together skillfully both Japan and China and her own poetic reaction to the two civilizations. Never heavily the pedant, she employs the brush stroke of the true artist, sensitive to the small happenings which may be transmuted into the fabric of poetic experience. A subtitle may bear these stigmata of the true poet—he who strives "to pass like a pilgrim, contemplating without desire," as in the statement: "To rest in the shade of the same tree implies a relation in former lives." Even so, the volume reminds us of much that may still endure when these strident and terrible days of the newest Japan are resolved into the ultimate unities.

Elizabeth Conner Lindsay

SWEDISH FESTIVAL

Arcadia Borealis: Selected Poems of Erik Axel Karlfeldt, translated by Charles Wharton Stork. University of Minnesota Press.

The need of a poet is to live and to express his living, and we may have as many kinds of poets and poetry as there are ways of living. Today, a good deal is said about social and esoteric poetry, and about poems of nature, but little of poetry that is natural as most people are natural, that is lively, warm and fully human. Perhaps it is because poetry, after all, is an art; and there are few who can enjoy an abundance of living and still keep their integrity as artists.

In the poetry of Erik Axel Karlfeldt these unsophisticated qualities are outstanding. He represents, more than any other Swedish poet, the land and the people that produced him. To read his swinging verse is to read the large happy heart of the Dalecarlian farmer. He is tempered with learning, but his themes are directly his earth and his heaven.

His earth is the grain fields and the apple harvest, the village inn for ale and dancing to the fiddle: It is girls and fresh kisses; winter winds and old men's thoughts. There is nothing of the city here. In *Preference* he says:

Hail to you, hands, that in childhood learned
The joy of the fight for bread,
Hands that are deft with the clacking loom
And the rake, when hay is spread.

There is contentment throughout, and such a joy in work and in hearty diversions that his poems, all together, give a feeling of a country festival. This is augmented by a rhythmical facility that at first makes his verses appear simpler than they are on rereading. Certainly he is a poet who invites rereading, if only

for the pleasure of such spontaneous singing as *Time of Waiting*.

If earth is real to Karlfeldt, heaven is real, too. He has no philosophical doubts or wonderings, so there is nothing nebulous about his heaven. It is biblical and assured. One of the most interesting parts of Karlfeldt's work is a group of ballads of scripture stories, *Dalecarlian Frescoes in Rhyme*, taken from the wall paintings of native artists. There is a salty tale of the fat but worthy prophet Jonah, and a gentle picture of *The Virgin Mary* as a Dalecarlian girl. In *The Assumption of Elijah* the good man sets out for heaven as a provincial landholder might go to a special church session in another city:

With Sunday hat and leather coat, a stout whip in his hand,
And a green umbrella by his knee.

In becoming a Nobel prize winner, Karlfeldt assumed world importance. We can be grateful for the ability and understanding of Mr. Stork in bringing the lyric distinction of this poet to the English language.

Ruth Dart Stephan

FORWARD FROM POSITIVISM

Language and Reality: The Philosophy of Language and the Principles of Symbolism, by Wilbur Marshall Urban. The Macmillan Company.

This deep and massive study by a Yale professor of philosophy of the imaginative use of language seems to me the most thorough that has emerged among English-speaking philosophers in two unusually rich decades.

It is a creative revolt against certain recent currents of philosophical thought in this field. Dr. I. A. Richards has been reducing linguistic meaning and our appreciative reaction to it to

the elementary facts of animal behavior. And the so-called positivists Rudolf Carnap and Alfred J. Ayer have followed him in regarding this appreciative reaction as not an act of insight but a blind emotion. There could then be no such ghosts as John Keats' truths of the esthetic imagination or Robert Browning's imaginative facts which make fiction alive. The anti-cultural artificiality and obtuseness which have sometimes resulted from these modernistic tendencies Professor Urban aims to correct by a fresh reconsideration of the whole problem of linguistic meaning and our appreciation of it, poetic and otherwise.

The essence of language and meaning, he finds, is the conscious representation of one region of experience through another experience. The life of language consists in naming infinitely many aspects of reality and transferring the names to other things. The movement is from unmodified copy to metaphorical analogy and from metaphorical analogy either to dead metaphor and the abstract concept of science or else to the poetically or religiously expressive insight-symbol. An insight-symbol, like a metaphor, is a representation or portrayal in terms of the alphabet of the familiar. But the pattern which is spelled out sembles forth and thus exhibits to our appreciation Keats' and Browning's truths of the imagination.

The positivists, as we should expect, deny the existence of any such insight-symbols. Urban refutes the positivists by a convincing account of the imaginative truths sembled forth. He shows that some aesthetic qualities and some other value qualities are emotional qualities which abide and remain constant while our appreciations of them fluctuate in the degree of their adequacy and play up and down. So there lies within the imagination itself a standard by comparison with which our emotional

appreciations are revealed or exposed as definitely either true or false. The verification of all such truths of the imagination, to contrast it with verification of truths about the world external to the imagination, is called "authentication." A fictional poem may thus be false about the physical world but deeply true at another level of reference, that is, profoundly authentic.

Urban's discussion of symbolic distortion, as it occurs in modernistic art and poetry, is noteworthy. Over-emphasis and under-emphasis of aspects of accustomed patterns, as in the grotesque, can express an imaginative insight not otherwise expressible.

In his theory of religious language, Urban carries his already profound analysis of emotionally appreciative language to a new high. Religious language is poetical language which not only intervenes in life but expresses greater depths of the same imaginative but independently real reality. Insight-symbols begin to seem forth to our self-authenticating appreciation the numinous, the *mysterium tremendum*, the infinitely holy. Myth is not a primitive substitute for science, but an attempt to symbolize the realm of authenticable spiritual insights in terms of natural and familiar metaphor.

The principle of distortion already discussed for poetry and the other arts is applied with telling effect to the field of religious language and symbolism. Final chapters on metaphysical insight through language round out by implication the whole theory of poetry.

Since the book concentrates on the fundamentals of linguistic symbolism, one must not expect to find here any discussion of the fluid relations of sound to sense, nor the sensitizing effect of meter, nor the expressiveness of various types of ambiguity, nor the distorting and selective influence of special interests on

the social climate of appreciative insights. And Urban's already fine study of emotional intuition, I venture to suggest, could have been greatly sharpened by using Alexius von Meinong's acute memoir presented in 1917 to the Vienna Academy of Sciences; and by using here also the classical Hindu conception of "rasa" or deep and abiding emotional appeal.

As it is, these seven hundred and fifty pages, replete with searching and delicate penetration and powerful thought of sweeping scope on the nature of appreciative language, should give those literary artists who are confused by contemporary positivism and psychology a new clarity and a new sense of direction.

David Hawxburst Wilson

NEWS NOTES

FEW who read of the death of DuBose Heyward, which occurred on June 16th at the age of 54, knew him as anything but novelist and playwright. It was his poetry, however, that won him his earliest literary recognition. He first appeared in POETRY in 1920. Two years later he published his *Carolina Chansons*, written with Hervey Allen, and in 1924 another book of poems, *Skylines and Horizons*. This was soon followed by his novel *Porgy*, later successfully dramatized, and by other stories and plays whose wide fame speedily and permanently overshadowed his reputation as a poet. Followers of POETRY who first read him in those early verse-writing years will recall the fine poems in which he celebrated the people of his native region, such poems as *A Mountain Woman* and *A Yoke of Steers*. At the time of his first acceptance he wrote: "I was born in Charleston, S. C., and could never be happy anywhere else except Paris."

The 1940 Hopwood awards, given for literary work by students at the University of Michigan, included three prizes for poetry, which were distributed as follows: \$800 to Edwin C. Burrows, of New Haven, Conn., for *Guernica and Other Poems*; \$700 to John Malcolm Brinnin, of Ann Arbor, Mich., for *The Lincoln Lyrics and Others*; and \$600 to Ethel H. Arehart, of Otswego, Mich., for *Lower Peninsula*. The judges were O. J. Campbell, Margaret Widdemer, and John Gould Fletcher.

The John Billings Fiske Prize, awarded annually for poetry at the University of Chicago, was divided this year between John Frederick Nims and Richard Amacher. We record with regret the recent death of Horace Spencer Fiske, the distinguished teacher and writer, who founded this prize twenty years ago in memory of his father.

Dylan Thomas, the young Welsh poet, is now serving with an anti-aircraft unit somewhere along the Channel coast. His new book of autobiographical stories, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, will be published this fall by New Directions.

A letter from the English poet and editor, Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, comments on the recent death of Dr. M. Hainisch, first President of the Austrian Republic. "I do not think it is generally known that Dr. Hainisch was a dialect poet as well as a much loved president and a fine agriculturist. . . . He told me that he would not publish anything while he was president, but it was quite likely that his verse would be printed after his death. I believe that the poem *Natur und Mensch* is the only poem of his that has appeared in any journal printed in the English language."

Although *Natur und Mensch* appeared in Mrs. Ratcliffe's magazine *The Microcosm* in 1922, it seems rather timely today. Here is the last stanza:

"Doch uns ist es nicht gegeben,
Mit Kummer müssen wir seh'n
Dass wir nur zu oft im Leben
Am Grabe von Hoffnungen steh'n."

Some readers have objected that the survey of the poetry market which we published last year [June 1939] contained no mention of the principal newspaper mediums. We have therefore asked some of the leading newspaper editors who buy poems to state their poetry requirements, which are printed herewith:

This Week, 420 Lexington Avenue, New York City, prefers "short topical verse, of sonnet length or shorter," but occasionally uses a longer poem, and pays one dollar a line, publishing one poem about every two weeks. Richard L. Field is poetry editor. The *New York Herald-Tribune*, according to Geoffrey Parsons, Chief Editorial Writer, uses a poem every day except Sunday on the editorial page, and seeks "topical verse, whether serious or frivolous, the shorter the better." He likes to think of verse as "in its way a sort of editorial comment." The *New York Times* prints a poem every day on the editorial page, not exceeding twenty lines, though occasionally a longer poem is used; short lines are preferred, because of the one-column space. Percy Hutchison is poetry editor. Most exacting of all is the *New York Evening Sun*, which uses a short daily poem on the editorial page, but warns: "Nature poems come in by the thousands and are returned. Politics are also out. Every day we hope to find

something like *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer*." The poetry editor wishes to remain anonymous. And John Ritchey of the *Christian Science Monitor*, Boston, Mass., writes. "We use two or three poems a day on the Home Forum Page. Editor is Miss Williamson. Lately there has been formed a committee of which I am a member to choose poems for the magazine section. We want first class poetry *only*. We pay a relatively high rate for this; that is, comparable to the large magazines."

The Bread Loaf Writers Conference will be held August 14th to 28th at Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt., with a faculty including Robert Frost, Wallace Stegner, John Marquand, Eleanor Chilton, Walter Pritchard Eaton, Herschell Brickell, and others.

Houghton Mifflin has announced, in addition to their two annual \$1500 Literary Fellowships, a new \$2500 "Life in America" contest. The award will be given to a book-length manuscript dealing with the "personal history" of some American whose life reflects significant aspects of his time, either past or present. It may be written "by or about an editor, teacher, minister, engineer, labor leader, businessman, housewife, or member of any other trade, profession or occupation." We trust that this would include poets. For further information address Houghton Mifflin, 2 Park Street, Boston.

Earl Robinson, who won a Guggenheim Fellowship for his *Ballad of Americans*, is completing an opera version of Carl Sandburg's *The People, Yes*, in collaboration with Norman Corwin.

We have been keeping our ear to the ground for the "repercussions" which William Everson said would result from the revelation of his hoax (see *POETRY* for May 1940), but they have been disappointingly faint. Some of our more conservative friends did take the opportunity to administer a mild spanking, as represented by this comment from a Boston reader: "Today a growing number of poems of the 'leftist school' are printed. Orthodox, unorthodox in form, they openly bear arms for the striker and picket-line brigade. Distinguished work continues to appear in *POETRY*, the occasional Olympian, but Mr. Everson is on firm ground when he charges that the mere class-struggle poem threatens to take precedence over anything else in the magazine at present." On the other hand, at least an equal number rose to the editors' defense. A California reader congratulates us on the "rare selection of interesting poems" in recent issues, and adds. "Even Mr. Everson's letter has its value. Is it Fresno? Or is he doing a Saroyan act? . . . I had not noticed *POETRY*'s plethora of 'social' verse." Apparently this sort of thing no longer arouses much interest—there have been too many similar hoaxes in the history of the magazine. The only unexpected repercussion was a letter of apology from Mr. Everson.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

E. E. CUMMINGS, one of the leading American poets, was born in Cambridge, Mass., in 1894, and now lives in New York City. He is the author of many books, the most recent being *Collected Poems*, published by Harcourt, Brace. In 1939 he was awarded the Levinson Prize by POETRY.

WALTER DE LA MARE, the famous English poet, has been a contributor since 1917. His latest book is *Behold This Dreamer*.

JAMES HEARST, of Cedar Falls, Iowa, appeared here for the first time in 1930. He is the author of a book of poems, *Country Men*, published by the Prairie Press.

C. F. MACINTYRE, of Berkeley, Calif., is the author of a recent book of poems, *Cafés and Cathedrals*, and is at present engaged in writing modern versions of *Faust* and *Electra*.

CHRISTOPHER LA FARGE, now living at Sun Valley, Idaho, is the author of two novels in verse, *Hoxsie Sells His Acres* and *Each to the Other*, one of the Book of the Month Club selections in 1939. He has contributed poems, stories, and articles to magazines.

TROY GARRISON was born in Hurst, Ill., in 1917, and now lives in San Diego, Calif. He was introduced with a group of poems in the July 1939 issue.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD, of New York, needs no introduction to readers of POETRY. Her *Collected Poems* were recently published by Harpers.

C. A. MILLSAUGH is the author of a book of poems, *In Sight of Mountains*, and of a novel, *Men Are Not Stars*. He is on the faculty of Frances Shimer College.

HERMAN SALINGER was introduced in 1935. He is a member of the German faculty at Wisconsin, and has contributed poems, translations, and criticism to magazines.

The following poets appear here for the first time:

CARL H. GRABO is a member of the English faculty at the University of Chicago. He is the author of several books, including the study of Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound: An Interpretation*. A book of his poems, *The Black Butterfly*, has just been published.

NIGEL HESELTINE is a young Welsh writer, age 23. He is the author of two books, *Violet Rain* and *Scarred Background*, and was formerly editor of *Wales*. He is now serving in the Air Force.

ROBERT FRANCIS is a native of Pennsylvania but has lived for the past fourteen years in Amherst, Mass. He is the author of two books of poems, *Stand With Me Here* and *Valhalla*, both published by Macmillan.

This month's prose writers include five previous contributors and three newcomers.

EUGENE JOLAS, now resident in New York, is the founder and editor of *Transition* and the author of many books in French, German, and English. A new book of his poems, *Planets and Angels*, was published this year. BABETTE DEUTSCH, of New York, is well known as poet and critic. Her most recent book of poems is *One Part Love*. RICHARD EBERHART, of Southborough, Mass., is the author of *Reading the Spirit* and other books of poems. HARRY ROSKOLENKO is a young New York poet, the author of *Sequence on Violence*. MARGARET WALKER, now studying in Iowa City, has appeared several times as poet and reviewer. DAVID HAWXHURST WILSON, of Cambridge, Mass., was formerly Fellow in Philosophy at Harvard and is now engaged in writing a five-volume work on the philosophy of values. RUTH DART STEPHAN is a young Chicago writer. ELIZABETH CONNER LINDSAY (Mrs. Vachel Lindsay) is now living in Hartford, Conn.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

- Let Each Man Remember*, by Josephine Jacobsen. Kaleidograph Press, Dallas, Texas.
Action, Didn't It, by Philip Conrad. Prairie Press, Muscatine, Iowa.
The Black Butterfly, by Carl H. Grabo. Packard & Co., Chicago.
En Route 1919-1939, by H. E. A. Platt. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford.
Burnt Fingers, by Royston Dewey. Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford.
Star Beyond Shadow, by Sibyl Pommer. Banner Press, Atlanta, Ga.
Muted Melody, by Sibyl Pommer. Banner Press.
Seeds of Doubt, by Alma Aquilino. Falmouth House, Portland, Me.
Forty Poems, by Edith Heilman. Dorrance & Co.
Another Fountain, by Aaron Kramer. Priv. ptd.
Maine Summers: Sonnets to My Mother, by Edna Worthley Underwood. Mosher Press, Portland, Me.

PROSE, TRANSLATIONS, AND AN ANTHOLOGY:

- Edward Arlington Robinson*, by Dorothy Livingston Ulrich. H. L. Lindquist, N. Y. C.
Poesia Religio, by Percy MacKaye. Imprimerie J. Brinkmann, Mulhouse, France.
Beowulf, trans. into alliterative verse by Charles W. Kennedy. Oxford Univ. Press.
Herodias, by Stéphane Mallarmé. Translated by Clark Mills. Jas. A. Decker, Prairie City, Ill.
Wings of the Dawn. Creative Writing Club, Aurora College, Illinois.

POETRY

announces for early publication

new poems by W. H. Auden, Léonie Adams, David Wolff, William Empson, David Daiches, Ruthven Todd, Haniel Long, Oscar Williams, Reuel Denney, Karl J. Shapiro, Harvey Breit; also prose articles by R. P. Blackmur, Kenneth Burke, John Gould Fletcher, H. R. Hays, J. V. Healy, and others

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POETRY *for September 1940*



| | | |
|--|----------------------|-----|
| Address to the Refugees I-IV | JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN | 293 |
| A Winter's Tale | RUTH LECHLITNER | 298 |
| The Target Is the Same | MARION STROBEL | 300 |
| Three War Poems | JULIAN SYMONS | 301 |
| End of a Year—Pub—Poem | | |
| April 29th | ALEXANDER F. BERGMAN | 305 |
| Now That the War Is Here | R. N. CURREY | 306 |
| Parting: 1940 | JOHN FREDERICK NIMS | 307 |
| Children in San Diego | MILLEN BRAND | 308 |
| Then | EDWIN MUIR | 311 |
| Three Poems | LAWRENCE LEE | 312 |
| In Time of War—While We Are Safe—The Syllable Will Be Heard | | |
| "As Through a Glass Darkly" | MARSHALL SCHACHT | 314 |
| For Wilfrid Owen | JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN | 315 |
| While We Slept | DAVID WOLFF | 316 |
| U. S. Writers in War | KENNETH FEARING | 318 |
| Poetry in the First World War | DAVID DAICHES | 323 |
| On the Continent | F. C. WEISKOPF | 332 |
| Reviews: | | |
| The Spirit Watches | ROBERTA TEALE SWARTZ | 334 |
| A New Adventure | FRAJAM TAYLOR | 337 |
| "Where To, Where Now?" | THOMAS HOWELLS | 340 |
| Lorca in English | JOHN GOULD FLETCHER | 343 |
| News Notes | | 347 |
| Notes on Contributors | | 349 |
| Books Received | | 350 |

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P O E T R Y

A MAGAZINE OF VERSE

VOL. LVI

NO. VI

SEPTEMBER 1940

ADDRESS TO THE REFUGEES

I

WE HAVE the statue for it—Liberty,
Whose classic vulgar hands invite you Home;
Whatever future stormed your reverie

Upon the lank Atlantic wastes, come,
Dissolve the terror and suspend the night;
Bid every dragon for a little while be dumb.

We, too, have tasted insolence, the weight
Of wilful ignorance; drilled on our eyes,
Have felt, somehow, the Gothic headlines cut

The brands of outraged innocence across
Your unmoved mouth. Without a foreign gift,
Bereft of anything but prophecies

To place intrepidly upon our soft,
Unbludgeoned palms, come into this, our day,
Where promises, at least, are somehow left,

Where Love, perhaps, may find its ultimate way;
Since we are young, and all our documents
Have not submitted and will not betray.

II

There, where the haloes of neon ascend,
We have erected this cloud-canceling
And always empty-windowed testament,

Stone on imported stone . . . wing upon wing
Arrive the unpossessable slow gulls,
(Like voices from the slums starved out of song)

Night-brooding on the sadness of the bells,
(The mazda-cheered departings on the quays)
As murkily anonymous as calls

That shake the lime-lit arms of seldom trees;
Such are the Dominant, coldly abroad
As independent as a reptile's eyes.

Come, then, to all of this, where even God
Competes with chewing gum in shifts of song;
Take these our presents, or permit the rod

Its senseless retribution on your wrong;
And when you are become insentient with
Our swing and sorrow, articulate a thing

Learned darkly in the old province of death;
Show us one milestone arrowed Liberty
Who rush toward dispossession lacking faith.

III

We know the shape of noble sympathy:
A sparrow's sudden fall is high concern
Among the traffic's mortal arteries,

Within the wilderness of No Return;
O you will learn it long before the spring
Has taught you how to cross a street or mourn.

Accept these lolling citizens who swing
As barbarous as the flowering underseas;
They are your fears come to a reckoning

Upon the alien squares; they are the lies,
Like skeletons of promises you made
Before the crippled cross leaned on the skies.

Illness claims us all, who learn to hate
Not killers and the causes of alarm,
But symbols of disguise that separate

Victim from vengeance in the gathering storm;
Point out an eye of malice in its mask,
A wolfish jaw, a death-delighted arm;

In guilt of ignorance, freely may we ask
That insight learned in violence to keep
Our native headsman from his headsman's task.

IV

Before the last plane west, while there is hope,
Conjoin the tissues of your outlawed blood
With ours. O, daughters of the banished, keep

Your tragic dignity, but come, regard
Our landscape with an unbruised eye,
Of life and builders be the fountainhead.

That when the lordly name for refugee
The beautiful rebellious, all who stand
As stubborn as their poverty, the day

Will echo with our young consanguine hands;
Impoverished with grief, no ship will sail
Into the luckier harbors of strange lands,

JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN

But everywhere will ancient peace prevail;
Who sing, as impermissible as flame,
Within the bareness of some hunted hall,

Must learn defiance like a given name.
There is no five-day boat to cooling Mars;
There is no savior prematurely come;

Whatever acre in the rush of stars
Will bear our footprints like a race of men
Awaits the tenant on his native shores.

John Malcolm Brinnin

A WINTER'S TALE

Born in these metal tubes beneath
Abandoned cities where no seasons turn
You ask about snow: the great white
Our ancestors knew as winter in December
When men lived with the cold air high about them.
(We breathe the bottled day, take the false light
Sterile upon our eyelids)—how shall I tell you?
Snow is the naked past, snow is the dream
We had before the sky became hell's house
And these sealed rooms deep in the dying earth
Our last escape.

What is snow like?

I can't say, but your great-grandfather knows.
(That's why he weeps: we have lost the need for tears)
Ask him: he's very old, but he remembers.

It was the last night of the last year above.
I was a boy then, shaking that fleece of stars
Careless from hair and shoulders, my heels from the street
High with the packed white (snow-rabbits we called them)
I felt the kiss-quick touch upon my mouth
Tasting of acid flame and apple wine.
(The snow, my child, is million-feathered crystal
Shining as thin steel, and it makes no sound)

I heard the sirens scream, cracking the ice-case
From iron gates, shutters; heard the bells—

Those flying antelopes in frosty steeples—
 Ring warning; saw the bewildered flakes
 Like dazzled moths blind in a searchlight's cone
 That traced the dark high flight of birds
 Shaking the death-snow from their heavy wings.
 The snow was shattered building-walls and blood
 And flesh in jagged glass—no, no, I can't remember!
 The snow I said the snow was white
 Healing and quiet—white, do you hear me, white . . .

Come away now: his wits wander: he's very old;
 He talks too much of snow—something perhaps
 That never was except in the old tales
 You read from books . . .

Like the sun, mother?

Hush, hush! Never speak that word
 Or his mind may break—they'll put him in the Room
 For Silence, with the one lately who shouted
 That Spring was here to all the tunneled walls
 And people stormed the exits to the Towers.

We came into night, the stars lost from our shoulders,
 Into these obscene roots for maggot-living—
 We sewer neighbors, rat to crawling rat,
 To save ourselves from snow . . . Snow was white I tell you
 Not the tombed light in this design for dying!
 I remember the cold air, the smell of frozen apples,
 Snow seeding white birth, Christmas snow, December . . .

Ruth Lechlitner

THE TARGET IS THE SAME

The target, like a Cyclops eye,
Pierces the forehead of the sky.

The butt of turf in front of it
Is green and flat. Two archers sit

Upon the bench—one old, one lame—
Their arrowheads are flint like those
They used when they were boys, their bows
Are yew. The target is the same.

Now one gets up, shivers, and puts
An arrow to his bow and shoots.

Together now their arrows skim.
It does not take them long to dim

That distant retina of gold.
Since both of them have been to war
They blind what they are shooting for.
Though one is lame and one is old.

Marion Stobel

THREE WAR POEMS

END OF A YEAR

December 1939

And in this year now
Remember all the harm.
The watcher on the hill
Weeps the heroic end
And under look of eyes
Or the bold clasp of hands
The lovers know their wrong.

Sleeplessly on the hill
They remember death's eyes.
Their expected soon is now;
Although the hyacinth hands
Never knew any harm
This year's violent end
Makes notable their wrong.

Summer was taking hands
To the blonde hair and eyes.
Now snow lies on the hill.
The year closes now,
The watcher knows the end
Of a time, though still our harm,
The dear inherited wrong

Murmurs over the hill.
Nothing can be said now

But that the meeting eyes ,
But that the loved hands,
But that the flowering end
Are tribal, meaning harm,
Are final, meaning wrong.

PUB

February 1940

The glasses are raised, the voices drift into laughter,
The clock hands have stopped, the beer in the hands of the soldiers
Is blond, the faces are calm and the fingers can feel
The wet touch of glasses, the glasses print rings on the table,
The smoke rings curl and go up and dissolve near the ceiling,
 This moment exists and is real.

What is reality? Do not ask that. At this moment
Look at the butterfly eyes of the girls, watch the barmaid's
Precision in pouring a Scotch, and remember this day,
This day at this moment you were no longer an island,
People were friendly, the clock in the hands of the soldiers
 For this moment had nothing to say.

And nothing to say and the glasses are raised, we are happy
Drinking through time, and a world that is gentle and helpless
Survives in the pub and goes up the smoke of your breath,
The regulars doze in the corner, the talkers are fluent;
Look now in the faces of those you love and remember
 That you are not thinking of death.

But thinking of death as the lights go out and the glasses
Are lowered, the people go out and the evening
Goes out ah goes out like a light and leaves you alone,
As the heart goes out, the door opens out into darkness,
The foot takes a step, and the moment, the moment of falling
Is here, you go down like a stone,

Are you able to meet the disaster, able to meet the
Cold air of the street and the touch of corruption, the rotting
Fingers that murder your own in the grip of love?
Can you bear to find hateful the faces you once thought were
lovely,
Can you bear to find comfort alone in the evil and stunted,
Can you bear to abandon the dove?

The houses are shut and the people go home, we are left in
Our islands of pain, the clocks start to move and the powerful
To act, there is nothing now, nothing at all
To be done: for the trouble is real: and the verdict is final
Against us. The clocks go round faster and faster. And fast as
confetti
The days are beginning to fall.

POEM

April 1940

The imagery personal, the dream severe.
Is it lust or ambition? But Time's teeth bared
Appall me, I remember my father,

A fair stout man with a short beard,
Good-natured, irascible, happy with men;
He is buried now under stiff board.

He loved the future and bred five children,
Four sons and a daughter, and I the youngest,
Looking forward I know to the day when

We should succeed him and attest
His skill as father and auctioneer.
But this did not happen: though his best

Wishes for us were all sincere
We got no power from that friendly nature
And do not hold what he held dear,

The family life and the family feature.
Hamlet my father's ghost in this room
Is irrelevant; here where the creature

Man talks and writes and accepts as an heirloom
His wicked content and his guileless and frequent
Sorrow, my father shrivels, and doom

Is devouring and single, the heart is bent
To lust or ambition, the ways are clear.
The world comes close and evil like a tent,
The imagery personal, the dream severe.

Julian Symons

APRIL 29TH

Will it be remembered
that this day was beautiful?
That all its history
was not recorded in communiqués,
conflicting headlines,
and the secret archives of chancellories?
 It was an ideal day for scouting flights
 and strafing enemy concentrations.

Not loud, nor hidden by design,
but still more secret than the plots
and plans that charted ways to death,
were the small, common deeds
of men who made no headlines,
gave no statements to the press,
men who made no choice of war or peace.
 And in the parliaments the guilty leaders said,
 The whole people are responsible.

Of these the substance of the day was made,
By these the day survived,
On these hope nourished and for these
the final war is fought.

It will be remembered that this day
was beautiful with usual skies,
with constant earth,
with sleep and work and love.
 It was a perfect day for flying kites.

Alexander F. Bergman

NOW THAT THE WAR IS HERE

Now that the war is here, thank God
For merciful close perspective, blocking out
Façades of peace which otherwise would dwarf
These stunted sandbag virtues by which we live—
For men must live by virtues, even when
Bombing the helpless innocents; even hearts
Pruned to the stump sprout virtues or else die!

In this diminished world we must acquire—
Although our small hearts ache, thin sinews crack—
Unplumbable courage, numb endurance,
Blind sacrifice, high skill in homicide.
God help us, peering close in Lilliput
At giants of seven inches, still to see
Only their pigmy splendor, their mouse magnificence.

R. N. Currey

PARTING: 1940

Not knowing in what season this again
Not knowing when again the arms outyearning
Nor the flung smile in eyes not knowing when.

Not sure beyond all doubt of full return
Not sure of time now nor the film's reversal
This all done opposite, the waif regathered.

We bag in hand with wandering steps and slow
Through suburbs take our solitary way
Not knowing in what season this again.

Not that all clouds are garrisoned and stung
Not that horizons loom with coppered legions
Not that the year is dark with weird condition.

All who parted in all days looked back
Saw the white face, the waving. And saw the sea.
Not knowing in what season this again.

For well they knew, the parters in all evenings,
Druids and hunters and the launched Phoenicians:
The blood flows one imposed way, and no other.

John Frederick Nims

CHILDREN IN SAN DIEGO

(Incident told by a friend)

At the end of the canyon where it narrowed
up from the marsh, with the eucalyptus
at their feet, they started to dig a trench:
the narrow tide was going out fast,
uncovering the sewer pipe in the bend

of the bay and withdrawing from the docks.
Freddie had brought his father's gardener's spade,
another a washboard, the ones from near Balboa Park,
just boards. Past the straight sunlight,
the afternoon—Tuesday—was dark

with the shadows of destroyers that had come
Monday ahead of the fleet, had seen the guns,
the crow's-nests thick with heads in white in
air. "How's this? We'll make it across here,"
Freddie said. The tunafishermen

on the shore were drying nets when they started,
and behind Coronado the row
of periscopes waited like the eyes
of eagles, had seen eagles in the air
as calm as bombing planes, to capsize

the line of a ship's deck whitely marked
on the ground in Imperial Valley. "Hurry up,"
Freddie said. "They may come before we get

it dug." They were children, but were
the shadows of men digging; they felt

it was war, had heard the sound of marching feet
at Fort Rosecrans and the hot shells
shaking the dusty roses, dropping full
petals like blood, had seen the petals
redly drying into the sand. Now all

dug hard, putting the dirt in front
for breastworks and putting the boards—
and in the center the zinc-lined washboard—
outside the level dirt for reinforcement.
They began to sweat; at four they heard

the echo of a whistle. Clouds like the great puffs
of the hidden guns on Loma Portal hung
across the west, they overhung the bay
in a conflict of the sky, roared
with propellers. The trench, a broken ray,

deepened steadily—rocks were piled
ready to be thrown when the enemy
came, and other weapons—sticks, knives—
laid near. They were nervous; laughter
came from them the way the trees below them shed

their little powder of spring from
the undersides of the leaves. They believed
no enemy would come, but a call
sounded. When the shore was paved
with the tide's drainage, the canals

of the golf club low, fish caught in
the delta mud, the slow attack began:
the Hunky kids attacking came careful
from ribbed trunk to ribbed trunk, square
twigs falling, had felt the horizon wear

smoke of cruisers over the floating man,
Corpus Christi Islands. In their eyes
a threat that had not been expected, the
seriousness of the poor. "The rocks, quick—"
In Hunkytown the Portuguese buy

poverty with their nets. The canyon was
dark with sound, the rocks traveling
the paths up and down, forward, back:
the washboard which had been solidly placed
and braced made an odd sound like

a clock tick—listened, had heard rifles
on the lower range off the strand
tick into the targets; there rose
a cry along the canyon walls a moment
later—"A twenty-two!"—stilling those

excited lungs, letting quietness follow
the stopping of the rocks: then Freddie
leaned forward and they saw blood running out
over his lips, his lips trying to say—
(had heard the voice of war) and could not move.

Millen Brand

THEN . . .

There were no men and women then at all,
But the flesh lying alone,
And angry shadows fighting on a wall
Which now and then sent out a groan
Stifled in lime and stone,
And sweated now and then like tortured wood
Big drops that looked yet did not look like blood.

And yet as each drop came a shadow faded
And left the wall.
There was a lull
Until another in its shadow arrayed it,
Came, fought and left a blood-mark on the wall.
And that was all; the blood was all.

If women had been there they might have wept
For the poor blood, unowned, unwanted,
Blank as forgotten script.
The wall was haunted
By mute maternal presences whose sighing
Fluttered the fighting shadows and shook the wall
As if that fury of death itself were dying.

Edwin Muir

THREE POEMS

IN TIME OF WAR

Silence and clock-tick lull the room.
Only the winter branches move.
No one would think that war had come
Nearer the lives of those we love.

Night minutes go in solemn peace.
How still the house. The innocent sleep.
How beautiful the lighted face
For love and memory to keep.

Since the first walls of Egypt stood
Night has come on and found men pressed,
With only gentleness and good
To batter down the iron fist.

WHILE WE ARE SAFE

While we are safe and there is time to say—
Listen: The good are strong,
They do not die away.
Ignorance, in arms, may rage and tarry long;
Before that fury you and I may be
Like leaves torn from a tree.
And yet the tree endures and, without sound,
Is watered underground.

THE SYLLABLE WILL BE HEARD

It is the word they fear,
Drawing us one to the other,
Letting the living hear
The dead man call him brother.

They have filled the cities with dead
To hush the powerful word,
But the syllable has been said
And the syllable will be heard.

Man to woman shall say:
"Let us breathe with our mingled breath
New shapes from the body's clay;
Love is longer than death."

As the tyrant reaches to kill,
Father has heard from son:
"Though the hand of love is still,
The deed of love will be done."

Nation to nation shall speak:
"The tyrant's day is a span.
We are brothers. Boundaries break.
The earth belongs to man."

Lawrence Lee

“AS THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY”

The coiled staccato speech,
The close-up hiss of headlines falls
On stationary ears.

Hello, America, this is Berlin.
I'm Pagliacci censoring my tears.

Hail, Columbia, N.B.C.,
All local stations hearing me!
I'm the guy you sent to tell
The details of a big farewell.

They've got him now, he's in the chair.
They cut his pants, they shaved his hair,
And friend and father left the town,
And London Bridge is falling down,
London Bridge is falling down.

As blind as glaciers, lost as those
Gray dinosaurs that once arose
And slipped like islands under sea,—
Events occur in Gay Paree.

The witnesses are gowned as if
They were the students and the stiff,
And half-heroic on the table
Shines the Soldier Boy, Clark Gable.

It is reported and they said,
Reliably, the world is dead.

It died when, Tuesday, at my side
A country fell on peace, and died.
And all the leaders stood around
Betting on that coughing sound.

Hail Columbia, N. B. C.,
All local stations hearing me!
There's nothing left except the need
To pin a medal on the deed.

Marshall Schacht

FOR WILFRED OWEN

This day, this night, should be familiar to you,
These sounds, these faces, this red mud and glare;
Again is served, upon the board that knew you,
The ugly feast at which you took your share.

The skeletons at ease beneath the crosses
Are unconcerned with diving Messerschmitts,
Impervious to estimated losses
And unambitious of directer hits.

You, safe as they, ignore delirium;
This time your lips escape the bitter ration,
And the sick stumbling men whose lips are dumb
Go scatheless from your terrible compassion.

Josephine Jacobsen

WHILE WE SLEPT

At four in the morning the smoke of the forded river,
A screen of leaves, and the best of a nervous generation
cleverly trained and bombed and dying forever.

While we slept in the tangled womb, we were armed and counted;
later as a child among people more sad and powerful,
we delighted in stars while graves were being planted.

Growing up, swimming, feeling the mind grow harder
beside the brilliant lakes, the sunlight between wars,—
our innocent names were figured in plans of murder.

Cool statesmen flying above our fears, protracted
crisis on crisis, till we cried to fire,—
unknown which way their promise of death was directed.

Autumn maneuvers and the praised betrayal,
September when we loved as in a burning house,
while ranks of metal were rolling to their empty trial.

Feeding us nitrate, but keeping the useful reflex,
our lungs on file and our probable loss discounted,
they will call us to lie awake in their deathly barracks.

Say no to the heroine, to the guilty sense of outrage
no, to the priest of immaculate nails, say no, no
to the name-bands massed, and the wet thrills of public courage.

Refuse their glory and their indignation,
their empire and their monument of the exploding plane
defending the free routes of the profitable ocean!

Our freedom is simpler: white hills, and weather uncertain,
our presence unmarked on official maps, and naked
embracing in the afternoon room with the rainy curtain.

If this be treason now, and our poems imprisoned,
our nerves and weapons given triggers of despair,
then, let our thoughts be deadly, our deaths be reasoned:

Defending not what we have, the kindly fortune,
the research of years in diseases of poverty,
the islands, the gold at Fort Knox, and the English porcelain,

But fighting for what we have not, and equal to suffer
wounds consciously in desire of life, of sun
universal, and the abolition of the poor.

David Wolff

U. S. WRITERS IN WAR

IT HAS been the fashion—and a very pleasant one it was—during the relatively tranquil years of the 20s and 30s, that whenever the issue of war and the writer was raised, discussion about it crystallized ultimately in the form of the question: What do you as a writer think about it, and what ought you as a writer to do about it? If it is painful now to remember the many and positive answers that were given it is so not because they were so wrong or seem now so out of date, but because we envy the innocence in which they were made. In the middle of a hurricane, the violence of which erratically but inexorably mounts, how happy one would be to be able again to give a reasoned opinion of hurricanes, and what ought to be done about them. But now in the 40s the issue of war and the writer must be cast, prevailingly, in the question: What is it going to do to us?

The first and most natural place to turn for an answer is to look at the source of the disaster and to estimate, as far and as accurately as possible, the future course of it. I am, of course, no better qualified than are you who read to give an authoritative thumbnail sketch of the social rivalries and contradictions, piled skyhigh in a highspeed age, that are at hand everywhere in the world and are being ironed out by a series of wars, some invisible and some open, now being waged in every conceivable field of human activity. But neither, one suspects, does the best-informed diplomat in the most influential chancellory in the world have all, or even half, of the jigsaw pieces necessary to piece together a final and clear picture of the world today. And if guesswork is the rule of the day one can

console himself with the knowledge that his guess is at least as good as Neville Chamberlain's, and certainly it can be no worse than Daladier's.

What, then, is happening, and how long will it, in this acute form of war, continue? How many more millions of people will be made homeless, be placed in concentration camps, be killed in battle, die of famine or of plague, before the various conflagrations raging in the structure of twentieth century society are put out or brought under control? Will the United States enter the war? Speculation and controversy regarding these problems have come to absorb, increasingly, the attention of nearly everyone in the U. S.—providing a partial answer, immediately, to the last question.

For whether we like it or not, or whether we even know it or not, it seems fairly clear that the U. S. is already in this series of wars. When stiffening taxes boost the price of the neighborhood movies and the cost of the family gin, the citizen's money is being spent not so much for park beautification and public health centers as it is for tanks, airplanes, and battle-ships, and these are not being built for ornamental purposes, nor for the pacification of Maine and Vermont. When, this fall, at the appointed time and the designated place, all male citizens between the ages of 21 and 31 register for possible, and some of them for immediate military service, the act, whether you are for it or against it, will mark less a crossroads than it will another of the many milestones on the road this country is traveling to the wars that now, seemingly, have no reasons acceptable to the common people for being fought, and have no solutions acceptable to the common people for being brought to an end.

For although today every diplomatic gesture and every military act emerges from a background of political, social, and economic forces that are obscure to begin with, and are perpetually arriving at new equations in chemical processes never tried before, the man in the street—or the writer at his desk—will have little trouble in reaching certain fixed conclusions. One of these is that he had better forget about “the end of the war.” It has been going on in constantly widening areas at least since 1931, and although there may be an occasional breather between rounds, there is nothing in the way of real evidence to suggest that the end is even remotely in sight. In other words, for this generation war cannot any longer be regarded as a tragic phenomenon but as part of normal life. When it is not an outright hazard, like motor accidents, it will be accepted as a nuisance, along with heat waves and community bores.

Another inescapable conclusion, of particular interest to the writer, is that there is no government or political party anywhere in the world today whose acts square, fully, with its publicly announced purposes—and in the case of some governments and some parties there is no bearing whatsoever between the promise and the deed. This ideological derangement (whether it springs from ignorance or simple perfidy) affects every government in the world, and reading from extreme left to extreme right, every big and little political party. That large numbers of Americans are thinking along these lines and have long ago, consciously or unconsciously, reached this conclusion is shown by every public poll, in which enthusiasm over current international issues runs high, is stubborn and unanimous—and seemingly contradicts itself. In fact, it would appear that the public feel there is a gyp in every *table d'hôte* dinner the governments

of the world are offering, and under those circumstances would prefer, at least for the time being, to order *à la carte*.

In its present phase (perhaps out of date by the time this is printed), this war with a thousand sides is offered to the American public in only two models—British, and German. For reasons too many and too self-evident to go into, this country's sympathies will always, in such a set-up, be with British claims, however absurd they may be—and they have never been more absurd than they are today. Every boatload of royal exiles arriving from London, every boatload of the children of England's wealthy families reaching these shores, sharpens American suspicions of the situation that obtains there, and gives evidence that if the English are going to fight for democracy, or even for their own lives, it will not be with the help of the present government, but in spite of it.

As for the claims of the other side—the Nazis say that they have a revolution. I suspect, though I would not attempt to prove it, that they have the beginnings of one. Certainly, under their perpetually shifting smoke-screen of lies and fantasies, a rationalization of industry and the state has taken place—inevitably a step toward socialism. But the socialism that is so far taking outline in our century, both in Germany and, less efficiently, in the U.S.S.R., displays as it unfolds characteristics that grow increasingly unappetizing. It does not resemble the kind of socialism that any college debating team I was ever on or ever listened to promoted, and its only connection with what passed for socialism among advanced trade-union circles at the beginning of the century is one of direct opposition. It had been generally held that socialism meant: shorter working hours, more pay, better living conditions, more leisure and more culture,

greater individual liberty, a more equal justice, and the brotherhood of man—peace, in short. Yet the apparition that confronts us—and it is not a temporary one—represents: longer working hours with less pay, no leisure and less culture, no liberty, living conditions and justice suitable for healthy slaves, and war without end. For the rationalization of industry and the state has been directed not toward a peacetime economy, but toward war. Peace or the rumor of peace, one is almost led to suspect, would be Germany's disaster.

In any case, whether these speculations are or are not borne out by future events, it can be generally agreed, I think, that it is both the privilege and the duty of the writer who calls himself creative to view with suspicion, in these years of war, the claims of the Ministry of Information, and the demands of the pseudo-patriot. All things considered it would be simpler, I suggest, for the individual writer to forget about himself as a moulder of public opinion. Writers are, collectively, moulders of opinion—but collectively, writers do not represent any unique viewpoint in the national life; collectively, they represent the same variety of views held by the general population. And I have never heard of a lone literary crusader who seized the stream of history and started it moving in an opposite direction. It will be enough if the writer refuses to lend himself to the more prodigious lies that mushroom in times like these.

What else? It can be said with certainty that in the years that follow it will be harder for the unknown writer to win a hearing and a following. That—the fact that the continuity of our work which, in its sum total, is the articulate soul of the U. S., is now threatened both from within and without—is to us a severe blow. In a sense, younger writers are already refugees

and exiles from their own profession. If we value the things that we ourselves have done, we should do what we can to see that they are encouraged to write. In wartime, the outlet for creative as opposed to commercial or state literature is much restricted.

But, however much we loathe the conditions under which the distinction has been forced upon us, and regardless of the immeasurable tragedy implicit in such a conclusion, the plain fact is that the writing, publishing, and marketing of creative literature is dead everywhere throughout the world except in the United States, and will be for some decades to come. Although this state of affairs is to us merely an added responsibility, when it is not a positive liability, our position is still fortunate. And we have already written so well, painted so well, designed and built so well, planned and fought so well, there can be no doubt that we shall continue to keep it so.

Kenneth Fearing

POETRY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR¹

THE REALITY of the last great war came slowly into English poetry. After the spate of patriotic verse at the beginning of the war—poetry ranging from the crude drum-beating of the journalistic poets to the meditations on the English countryside of the Georgians—there gradually appeared indications of a more realistic attitude. In the 1916-1917 volume of *Georgian Poetry* appeared three war poems by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (whose war poetry, though standing apart from the rest of his work, is not

¹This essay will be included in a book by Mr. Daiches, *Poetry and the Modern World*, to be published this fall by the University of Chicago Press.

dissimilar in quality) where for the first time something of the truth was told. In level even tones concealing an irony more controlled but no less effective than that of Siegfried Sassoon, he described single incidents:

I felt a sudden wrench —
A trickle of warm blood —
And found that I was sprawling in the mud
Among the dead men in the trench.

Or, as in the poem *Lament*, also in this volume, he rejects the facile consolation which had sufficed for John Freeman in his *Happy Is England Now*. In the quietness of Gibson's war poetry lies much of its effect. He has no clear attitude, he cannot pause to think through what it all means, but he tells the truth in simple unadorned verse and leaves it at that. The irony emerges automatically, as it were:

This bloody steel
Has killed a man.
I heard him squeal
As on I ran.

The poem from which this verse is quoted did not appear in *Georgian Poetry*, nor indeed did any of Gibson's war poetry appear there apart from the three poems already referred to. Yet the whole sequence of thirty poems entitled *Battle* was written in 1914-15. There is little skill in these verses, but they are clearly etched, and possess power:

I lay an age and idly gazed at nothing,
Half-puzzled that I couldn't lift my head;
And then somehow I knew that I was lying
Among the other dead.

In the same volume of *Georgian Poetry* in which Gibson's three war poems appeared there were also printed several of Siegfried Sassoon's war poems. Sassoon was the first English

poet to rebel with vigor and passion against the older tradition of war poetry, and he was one of the very few poets who expressed this mood continually and violently while the war was still in progress. The ironic note in his verse is not subdued, as it is in Gibson, but emphasized and shouted out loud. These poems published in the Georgian volume were more restrained than his verse published independently in *The Old Huntsman* (1917) and *Counter-Attack*, but his characteristic fire is clearly heard.

So Davies wrote: 'This leaves me in the pink'
Then scrawled his name: 'Your loving sweetheart, Willie'
With crosses for a hug. He'd had a drink
Of rum and tea; and, though the barn was chilly,
For once his blood ran warm; he had pay to spend . . .

And then he thought: tomorrow night we trudge
Up to the trenches, and my boots are rotten.
Five miles of stodgy clay and freezing sludge,
And everything but wretchedness forgotten
Tonight he's in the pink; but soon he'll die.
And still the war goes on; *he* don't know why.

The note is perhaps more clearly heard in the poem *They*, where the Bishop's statement that "When the boys come back they will not be the same; for they have fought in a just cause" is put beside the boys' reply:

'We're none of us the same' the boys reply.
For George lost both his legs, and Bill's stone blind;
Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die;
And Bert's gone syphilitic; you'll not find
A chap who's served that hasn't found *some* change.

This is a crude type of poetry, but it gets its point across with effective vigor. The tone becomes more aggressive in his later poems:

Does it matter? — losing your sight? . . .
There's such splendid work for the blind;
And people will always be kind,

As you sit on the terrace remembering
And turning your face to the light.

Unlike Gibson, Sassoon continually expresses the underlying feeling that some one is to blame for it all—perhaps the smug civilians who cheer when troops march by on their way to embarkation, perhaps the “scarlet Majors at the base” who “when the war is done and youth stone dead” will “toddle safely home and die—in bed.” There is a terrible indignation here, but its direction is confused.

The quietest of all the war poems were written by Edmund Blunden who saw war against the background of daily pastoral life which it had interrupted (a mood frequent also in Gibson) and recorded with patient fidelity what he observed in these moments; as, for example, in *A Farm Near Zillebeke*:

Black clouds hide the moon, the amazement is gone,
The morning will come in weeping and rain;
The Line is all hushed — on a sudden anon
The fool bullets clack and guns mouth again.
I stood in the yard of a house that must die,
And still the black hame was stacked by the door,
And harness still hung there, and the dray waited by.

Black clouds hid the moon, tears blinded me more.

Poems like this—*Battalion at Rest*, *Vlamertinghe: Passing the Chateau*, July 1917, *Rural Economy* (1917), *The Sentry's Mistake*—show a quality of philosophic observation rare in war poetry. Blunden has no thesis about the rights or wrongs of the war, he has no indignation, no wish to denounce. His dominant mood here is simply one of sorrow, enhanced by the continual impingement on the present situation of pre-war memories of life and growth and peace. His war poetry has thus a plangent quality entirely lacking in that of Sassoon. In all his poetry Blunden sounds the subdued elegiac note. He is one of the few

English poets who have achieved some success in carrying the mood of the Georgians into the post-war world. But his verse lacks vitality; it solves no problems, achieves none of the quick cutting to the heart of things which some of his younger contemporaries, using a more difficult and a more complex dialectic, have on occasions managed. The meditations of a sensitive yet in some respects an academic mind, his work does not achieve the vision which shifting values and a worn-out medium demanded and as a result most of his poems lack that burning core and complete integration which we find in the poetry of those poets who, wishing language to meet the urgency of their own problems, by being "modern" produce what will nevertheless have meaning and vitality for future generations.

Perhaps the best of all the poetry produced as a result of the war was written by Wilfrid Owen, who was born in 1893, three years before Blunden, and was killed on November 4, 1918—exactly a week before the armistice—while endeavoring to get his company across the Sambre Canal. Before the war he had begun his career as poet largely under the influence of Keats. But at this stage he was simply experimenting with ways of handling language, learning his craft, disciplining himself. His war experiences found him with no preconceived attitude; he was honest both as man and as poet, and he waited to see what the war was to mean for him and his poetry. He brought all his process of poetic expression—still at the experimental stage—to his endeavor to find and to express the real meaning of the situation in which he found himself. He moved slowly from description to interpretation, his earlier war poetry being concerned with adequate expression of the facts and his later verse endeavoring to arrange the facts in some symbolic and significant

pattern. A poem like *Exposure* or the fragment "*Cramped in that funnelled hole*" is simply descriptive. Yet even here we can see the poet searching for a new handling of his medium which would give more urgency and effectiveness to his expression:

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glazed
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;
Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed,—
We turn back to our dying.

In these poems there is a careful originality in the use of adjectives and in the balancing of rhythms, and a deliberate use of half-rhyme instead of conventional rhyme, which indicates qualities possessed by Owen from the beginning—qualities which set him apart from the poets of the Georgian anthologies even before he turned to his particular kind of war poetry. As interpretation succeeded description in his poetry of the war, Owen gradually developed the theme suggested in the draft of a preface to a projected volume of poems found among his papers after his death:

This book is not about heroes. English Poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.

Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War.

My subject is War and the pity of War.

The Poetry is in the pity.

Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory.

They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is to warn.

That is why the true Poets must be truthful.¹

It is not easy to say exactly what Owen meant in this hastily written draft of a preface. He seems to be saying that his war poems

¹*The Poems of Wilfrid Owen*, edited with a memoir and notes by Edmund Blunden. London, 1931.

are not concerned with any of the subjects conventionally associated with war, nor is he concerned with mere poetizing, in the manner of so many of the Georgians. When he says that English poetry is not yet fit to speak of heroes, he seems to mean that the real nature of the heroism called forth by the war could not be adequately expressed in any of the traditional ways nor in the poetic medium in its present state; the truth was difficult to discover and even more difficult to communicate. When he asserts that "Above all, I am not concerned with Poetry" he is obviously rejecting any self-conscious aesthetic aim: he was concerned with expressing adequately the truth as he saw it, as he had experienced it, and for him adequately implied poetically. "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity" indicates that the meaning of the war experience, as he has come to grasp it, lies in its sheer pity, its futility, its waste. By expressing that truth his poetry might become a warning. But it could have no other moral. For himself, he was expressing the essential reality of the situation as he saw it, and that was his whole aim. If in achieving this aim he also achieved a propagandist effect—in the sense that the truth carries its own message—he would not repudiate that effect or deny that he had foreseen it.

He did not immediately arrive at the interpretation that is summed up in the phrase "The Poetry is in the pity." After his early descriptive verses he attempted some in Sassoon's style, in which he was concerned simply to attack false attitudes to the war: e.g., his poem *Dulce et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori*. This is crude verse, where the passion is expressing itself in simple rhetoric. But Owen soon moved to a calmer kind of interpretation:

... Whether his deeper sleep lie shaded by the shaking
 Of great wings, and the thoughts that hung the stars,
 High-pillowed on calm pillows of God's making
 Above these clouds. . . .
 — Or whether yet his thin and sodden head
 Confuses more and more with the low mould,
 His hair being one with the grey grass
 And finished fields of autumns that are old . . .
 Who knows? Who hopes? Who troubles? Let it pass!
 He sleeps. He sleeps less tremulous, less cold.
 Than we who must awake, and waking, say Alas!

Owen's progress was not, however, a simple one from satiric to contemplative war poems. The violent anger that breaks through *Mental Cases*, *Disabled*, and other poems is that of a man who has not resigned himself to express merely the pity of war, but who is equally anxious to convey its horror, its terror and its cruelty. But in the midst of these we begin to find more disciplined verse sounding a profounder note, poems whose simple elegiac quality indicates Owen's progress towards the ideal indicated in the draft preface. The *Anthem for Doomed Youth* impresses by its simple opening question

What passing bells for those who die as cattle?
 and the slow and plangent answer:

No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,
 Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
 The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
 And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
 What candles may be held to speed them on?
 Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
 Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
 The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
 Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds,
 And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

This, perhaps the best of Owen's poems, is, for all its simplicity, a highly organized piece of work. The series of multiple contrasts set going between war-time life and peace-time life, between

the battle-front and domestic scenes of home, by the careful choice and arrangement of images shows a grasp of poetic structure that proclaims the mature poet. The precise position in the poem of the term "cattle" (with its double suggestion of war-time horror and peace-time farming linking with similar combinations and contrasts throughout the poem), the effect of the phrase "sad shires" (with its suggestion of a denuded pastoral England sending forth its sons to die amid foreign horror), the whole weaving of contrasts and correspondences that achieve effectiveness by a deliberately multiple relationship between the two (parallels fading into contrasts and vice-versa, thus adding to the depth and poignancy of the poem) are questions that could be discussed at length had we the space to pause at a single poem.

The incomplete poem *Strange Meeting* can stand beside *Anthem for Doomed Youth* as expressing with calm and terrible effectiveness "the pity of war." Unfinished as it is, *Strange Meeting* yet has a certain completeness: there is the story of his meeting the strange friend in Hell, the other's discourse on "the undone years, the hopelessness" common to both of them, and the final recognition and resolution:

I am the enemy you killed, my friend . . .
Let us sleep now.

The poem moves smoothly to its sudden and hopeless close (for the close *is* hopeless: there is no way of regaining the life that both were prevented from living and utilizing; the only good left is oblivion for both). There is complete technical mastery here, a consistent and careful use of half-rhymes, a subtle and well-handled imagery. There can be no doubt that Owen was developing rapidly, seeking out new attitudes, mastering

new subtleties of techniques, responding to experience with that adaptability both as man and as poet which distinguishes the genuine artist from the talented pedant.

Just what the war of 1914-1918 did to English poetry is very difficult to determine. Of course it produced war poetry, a poetry which changed in character as the realities of war became better known. It probably helped to make the Georgians look out of date some years before they otherwise would have, though it is difficult to be certain of this. One specific and tangible result was that it killed off a great number of promising poets.

David Daiches

ON THE CONTINENT

IN an interview published recently in the *New York Times* book section, Stefan Zweig said that the ivory towers in our time are not at all bomb-proof. This is no literary metaphor. It is the description of a very real situation. In a world where human lives are cheaper than raspberries and whole social and state organisms are cracked like peanuts, the lives of European poets are not more expensive than the average. Every one of us who somehow fortunately escaped from fascism gets letters from friends who are stranded somewhere in Europe. And in every letter there is news telling the history of European literature in our time. Let me pick out some referring to poetry and poets.

The newspapers published reports from Switzerland and Britain that Franz Werfel, one of the foremost poets of Austria, had been killed by the Nazis in France. This report is not true. But it may become a sad reality if Werfel does not have a chance to get out of the unoccupied zone of France. He is there, hidden

in one of the little towns of Provence, waiting like 250 other German and Austrian writers—waiting for what? For Hitler to present his list of those “former German and Austrian citizens” who are exiles in France and whom the French government is ready to extradite under clause XIX of the armistice, unless they are brought out of France before it is too late.

Walter Hasenclever, the playwright and poet, thought that it was *already* too late. He also was in France. He tried to cross the border into Spain. Spanish border guards returned him to France. “I stand here,” he writes in a last letter to a friend, “before me a closed border and behind me the Gestapo. I prefer the ‘way out.’ It is better to die by one’s own hand than to be murdered after being humiliated. Suicide—that is the only possibility of preserving our dignity.” He was found dead at the border.

Bertold Brecht had a narrow escape from Scandinavia. He is waiting in Helsingfors for an American visa. From all his books he saved one copy of his last poetical work, *Sonnets of Svendborg*, written in the little Danish town which was mentioned in one of the German war bulletins: “incidentally bombed.” Heinrich Keisch, a young German exile who only recently began to write, winner of the Heine prize for a first book of poetry—unknown somewhere in France. He may have been caught already by the Gestapo. He may be wandering restlessly in the unoccupied zone without money, without shoes, and starving, as another young exiled poet from whose letter I quote:

I got out of Paris three days before the Germans marched in. I will never forget the scenes of this flight. We walked twenty hours the first day, then we found a carriage which took us for our last money to L. Then we walked again. I have no more soles on my shoes. A man in R. gave me a plate of soup. I had no opportunity to wash myself. And the terrible mis-

trust everywhere. To be looked at like a parachutist and be driven away from the Nazis. . .

Jozef Witlin, the brilliant translator of *The Odyssey* into Polish verse, and Julian Tuwim, representative of the Polish poetical vanguard—both in exile in Paris and both banished by the Nazis—where are they now? The young Czech poet Brusak, likewise in Paris until June—where is he?

In the Nazi protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia some of the foremost Czech poets are still alive and even allowed to publish, but what they publish is a poetry with broken wings, and it is not by chance that in the verses of Toman, Hallas, and Nezval the words "I am sick" are repeated over and over. Rudolf Leonhard is in the "camp of undesirables" in Le Vernet. He writes: "We all expect the worst. Sometimes we dream of the song of Polly in *The Beggar's Opera*. You know it is the song of a ship coming to the pier, but it is also the song of a terrible massacre."

Louis Aragon is in flight before the joint hunters of the Gestapo and Marshal Pétain's Sureté. Is he still alive? His last poem was entitled *The Time of Cross Word Puzzles*. It was written in a pillbox at the Western Front.

F. C. Weiskopf

R E V I E W S

THE SPIRIT WATCHES

The Spirit Watches, by Ruth Pitter. The Macmillan Co.

A POET can be offered no better praise at the moment than the assurance his work is readable in the face of current events. That this is as true of Miss Pitter's present volume as it was of her last, *A Trophy of Arms*, carries her nearer the mark in fame which Belloc set for her, and reminds us that James

Stephens placed her next to Yeats, and called her "perhaps the purest poet of our day." Many must hang upon the times as precariously as needles on a water-surface; only two or three can float the times. Dubious, quaking, personal, propagandist, Cassandraic, Miss Pitter is never, and to say so is merely to rediscover in her that superiority over "the peasant poet, lately removed to the city, and all agog at the lights of Hickville," which allows us to rest in the contemplation of one who has subordinated himself to his humanity, and history to an art.

To rest, not to escape. When empires rock, and languages and literatures with them, the poet must have in him something of the heroic even to retain our attention. When the market value of life depreciates, compassion is out of date, and beauty beside the point. Gone are the days of Cuchulaine, when the poets reiterated in the thick of the fight the glory of being representative though individual. Their resignation was long ago; it is no secret that many have slunk away into cowardice, succumbed to the merely cryptic and the subjective, and taken orders from instead of instructed the philologists and politicians. To translate the moment, to interpret the life, our place on the planet and our home in the spirit, to let the long view into the minds of the panic-stricken, is to assume a vanished office: that compassion, or *sens paternel*, without which poet or novelist can have no lasting authority.

Miss Pitter can do this, and though the ability is not as consistent here as in *A Trophy of Arms*, it is unimpaired, and depends; as ever, upon an ancient set of skills. Here are perhaps no descriptions to match *Stormcock in Elder* of the earlier volume, but from the empty honeycomb to *The Military Harpist*,

Prawn eyed, with prawnlike bristles, well-waxed moustache,
With long tight cavalry legs, and the spurred boot
Ready upon the swell . . .

she is unfaltering, not over-supported by metaphor, and never embroiders, although the reflection at times produces with the description an almost 17th century richness of blend, as in *Burning the Bee-tree*, *Lament for the Landless*, and the hymn *O Come Out of the Lily*. In reflection Miss Pitter is as well-equipped and disciplined as in observation. Naturally, she must be in the first place perfectly oriented to make this possible. She never forgets the remote background of creation, *The Primordial Cell*

Wealthy, though all her progeny die in the world's ruin . . . , our place in the heavens, our footing upon the planet and in mystery, the close presences of plants and animals, the seasons, the proportions of land and sea, the active treasures of mathematics.

That from these she can venture to rational apprehension and the things of the spirit with a sure step, makes Miss Pitter seem old-fashioned at times. Some of her figures are like Spenser's in their formality, as in the final stanza of *The Stockdove*. She can briefly appear a less melancholy Arnold, a more tender Blake, a Herbert worldlier, a Wordsworth extricated from lead. She is not afraid of words like soul, duty, sympathy, humble. One wonders how many will be reminded of the forgotten *Ode to Duty* in reading Miss Pitter's title-poem in which she asks what fearful thing is the spirit, that "knows the worst and does not care,"

. . . sees
Joy failing, and the gaping grave,
That knows our bitter mysteries,
Our death, our life of little ease,
The coward's hell, the anguish of the brave . . .
We are not worthy of the soul!
Through light and dark, through love and pain,
We see our sphere of being roll,
And will not face the living whole
That sent us forth, and calls us home again . . .

One wonders what memories will surprise those who read of the two fisher-children, *The Hut*, *The Solitary*, the old nurse, the ironing woman comforted by the sparrow that

Brooded the shabby eggs which no one loved but she.

Yet Miss Pitter offers us no empty romanticism, useless sentimentality. Sometimes in the kind of sturdiness shown in 1938 she seems like an antique Anglo-Saxon. She has a sense of "in-violate law," and her joy, though she cannot find where it comes from now when "birth becomes an ill," is not rootless. It is the authentic joy of the poet; it does "cleave the chaos and prevail."

Roberta Teale Swartz

A NEW ADVENTURE

Homeward to America, by John Ciardi. Henry Holt & Co.

"The Foolish Wing," writes John Ciardi in *Homeward to America*,

Is done now with bright thinness of upper air. Weight
Of body sinks earthward: good capture. Probing of wing's
Torn muscle under the raised and eager feathers
Points obvious and necessary truth. Time grows too late
For the torn ligament to attempt heaven. There is
Nothing either in remembering.

And it is just this spirit of practical realism and undaunted recognition of "obvious and necessary truth" that dominates this first volume in which all the fiery eagerness of youth colors and quickens the sober reflections of maturity. While only four out of the thirty-four poems have America for their immediate theme, the titular emphasis is well founded; for though Ciardi experiments occasionally with more intimate themes—as in *The Visit* and *Valediction*—he is at his best when inspired by the problems pertinent or auxiliary to the furtherance of his avowed

purpose. Furthermore, having made it clear in the excellent *Letter to Mother* that the "dynastic example" of her coming to America may be emulated only in a traveling "across the sprung longitudes of the mind—And the blood's latitudes" he not merely indicates the nature of his turning "inland," but brings to the projected adventure all the earnestness and sturdy vigor—the hope in, and courage to meet, the future—which the early American pioneers brought to theirs.

Like his mother, who encountered "the rankness of steerage, the landing in fog . . . the tenements, the reek and the shouting in the streets," and those earlier arrivals whose dreams of a heavenly Arcadia struck against the awakening reality of a hard and savage earth, he, too, has had his disappointments; and in the fine poem *To Westward* he writes tersely but feelingly of the disillusionment attendant upon a trip west, where he had expected to find reminders of all that marked the age and achievement of such national heroes as Clarke, Custer, Pike and Johnny Appleseed, but found instead only parched earth, soot, smelteries and slums where gray-muscled men loitered and drifted in unrhythmical routine—with nothing to say, and nothing to do—just waiting:

Sun, distance, mountain line, voices: burr and drawl—
These were as imagined. What broke the mind
Like the interrupted poem was lost direction.
Men going nowhere, hands pocketed, heels kicking the wall.

But this poet who has made a "sextant of heart," nailed his bearings to sun, knows that "the seasons of innocence are numbered," and that

The hardy heart must come prepared
With more than love to travel long—

He accepts the unromantic truth rather as a challenge than as

a deterrent; and by this convincing attestation of his own ability to find adventure "natively" adds weight and beauty to his hope and faith in America.

But Ciardi brings something more than the sober realism and earnest maturity of his apprehensions to his task and to his poetry. And if he is wise enough, and honest enough, to say that

The romance is dead,
Childhood gone under. Time is the offense:
What work we do against the shriveling head
Of years is done in self-defense

and reasonable enough to ask:

What are we sure of but the stated purpose,
The hope to make it real and the long fear
That time may stamp it VOID, and close
A canceled journal for our meaning here?

he is also passionate enough to be filled with pity and indignation that there should be so little time for love; while at the same time bitterly resenting the indifference to disaster of some, and growing ever more hotly impatient over the fear and timid vacillation of others—who, in a time of great danger to the integrity of their country and their ideals, feed "steel-caged hearts" on hesitations and allow all "necessary murder" to rise high in the mind only: "Falling limp and undone from the hand's grasp."

John Keats once wrote that "There may be reasonings, but when they take an instinctive form, like that of animal forms and movements, they are poetry, they are fine: they have grace." And John Ciardi whose turning homeward to America is not only the reasoned gesture of an adult mind, but the instinctive action of a youth eager for adventure and knowing where to find it, fulfills all the promise of poetry and grace predicted by the older poet when he declares:

We have given our minds to reason in the night
And were lost in too many causes, too many effects
And probabilities, till the mind sees but cannot choose.
And yet we rise and must rise and the day is upon us
And the heart lifts . . .

It is instinct now, not reason. And the way
Of the remembering nerve is toward the day.

Frajam Taylor

"WHERE TO, WHERE NOW?"

First Manifesto, by Thomas McGrath. The Swallow Pamphlets:
No. I. Baton Rouge, La.

Personal Sun, by Hubert Creekmore. The Village Press, Prairie
City, Ill.

ABC'S, by Charles Henri Ford. The Village Press.

First Manifesto is, as the title implies, a first collection of twenty-four poems rather continuous in theme and emotion. At least, it is opened and concluded by poems similar in style and significance. *This Room, in This Street, in This Time* is a report of men, soldiers, in a hostile land, the report told in the fragmentary statement-style of MacLeish's *Epistle To Be Left in the Earth* or of certain passages in Auden's *The Orators*. Here in one stanza, as the poet says, "All await portents." In the concluding poem, *Charnbus-Midnight-Warning*, these portents are specified:

Sign no papers, beware of forgers. November
Smokes with evil. Sun in Sagittarius
Poisons our sultry blood. Take care. Remember.

✓ These Audenish overtones signalize but, fortunately, do not comprehend the book. Mr. McGrath sings of a bankrupt society as one of what he calls "the exiles of tomorrow." In *Poem To Be Nameless*, where this phrase occurs, in *Scenario*, in *Letter to Wendell*, in *Explicit Carmen*, among others, the social motif is

loud, though seldom deafening. *Scenario* mingles expressionistic stage directions, machine images, mock litany, and perilous excerpts from rhetorical log-books in a manner which is much employed by Mr. Auden and which is often thought to be satirical.

At times, I feel, Mr. McGrath's enthusiasm for the better society leads him far from both truth and poetry, as when he says in *Letter to Wendell*,

I have known personally horses
Who were more alive than many college professors.

Had he said that he had known dead horses who were more alive than the college professors, the statement would have had rhetorical worth if not poetical significance. As it stands, it has nothing. And in the same poem when the poet, talking of "futile rhyme," says

Myself would trade my two so deathless lines
(As yet unpublished) for the acid flame
That makes us marvel at Vanzetti's name

I have no inclination to cheer. Deathless lines are not written for trading; and the memory of a brave life is not prolonged by the truckling of the art which should record it.

The shorter poems are more authentic, I feel. Here is the last stanza from *Figure for Strings*.

Do voices lift from the dead earth? What sounds
Are fled in the dry wind? What nameless words
Ask: Where to? Where now? How long? What questions,
What words, what sounds, what lost and alien voices?

The rhythm and the emotion here seem to me highly effective, as they are, except for the last line, in *Up the Dark Valley*.

The first twenty of Mr. Creekmore's "early" poems are obviously the work of a poet with a considerable but immature talent. They are a series of sonnets which depart from regularity in

Ask horror for a helping hand,
peel the glove to fit your own:
feel his heart of shifting sands
turn to a lake of stone.

Some of these very quotable stanzas are in reference to the world situation, a nightmare whose systematic horror might well drive even a surrealist to refuge in tangibility and concreteness. There is this pointed comment under *L*:

Lift the illogical contraband
from your favorite brute:
footlights follow those who can,
blackouts swallow those who won't.

And, similarly, these lines for *N* have an edge worth feeling:

Nothing, nothing is so valuable
as freedom, Dante said.
Nothing, nothing is less haveable:
ask anyone. Dante's dead.

The scorn is implicit but challenging.

Thomas Howells

LORCA IN ENGLISH

Poems of F. García Lorca, with English Translation by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili. Oxford University Press.

The Poet in New York and Other Poems, by Federico García Lorca. The Spanish Text With an English Translation by Rolfe Humphries. W. W. Norton & Co.

Blood Wedding (Bodas de Sangre). A Tragedy in Three Acts and Seven Scenes by Federico García Lorca. Translation by Gilbert Neiman. New Directions.

The translation of any important poet from one language into another is always a difficult, and almost an impossible task. When the language into which the poem has to be translated, out of a tongue infinitely richer in vowel and in rhyme effects, happens

to be English, the task is usually not even worth the trying. How many good verse-translations do we have in English? Gawin Douglas' old *Aeneid* is at least an epic poem in its old Scots; Chapman's Homer may not be Homer, but has surge and drive at least; Fitzgerald's Omar certainly is not Omar, but at all events is a poem. Who else? Well, one can mention Mr. Waley's renderings from the Chinese—though only a Chinese scholar could say whether they are exact; Mr. Pound's more magnificent, but probably even less exact renderings from the same tongue, and from the Anglo Saxon; and one or two other interesting attempts, like Mark Wardle's with Valéry, or Aldous Huxley's with Mallarmé. Roger Fry's versions of the latter poet I have not seen. The recent translations of Rilke certainly give little of that poet, except to those unfamiliar with German; and the present versions of Lorca give—almost nothing at all. For Lorca is admittedly impossible to translate, since so much of his work is dependent on the guitar effect, the sheer quality of the sound.

Both Stephen Spender and Rolfe Humphries are poets; but neither seems particularly aware that the poet they chose to translate was sufficient of a musician as to be referred to by Manuel de Falla—the greatest of Spanish musicians—as “my son.” Both are pursued by the demon of prose literalness—so that what they offer is not a translation but a crib. In the only poem where there is any basis for comparison, the *Ode to Walt Whitman*, it is Humphries who is the better poet. Here is Spender:

Not for one moment: virile beauty
who in mountains of coal, advertisements, and railways
dreamed of being a river, and sleeping like a river

with that comrade who would place in your breast
the small pain of an ignorant leopard

Thus Spender, in his hobbling phrases. The slight changes which Humphries makes in these same lines are all significant of an honest desire to give something closer, not to the plain sense, but to the "feel" and rhythm of Lorca's Spanish.

But if Humphries shows, here and there, a more sympathetic kinship to the poet whom he is translating—as well as a freedom from the schoolboy mistakes that clog Spender—that is not to say he is perfect. He has devoted two-thirds of his book to a complete translation of the *Poeta en Nueva York*, a collection important only in Lorca's own development as marking the transition from the early *Romancero Gitano* of 1928 to the starker and more solid style of *Bodas de Sangre* of 1933. That Lorca himself was not entirely satisfied with these poems is shown by the fact that they were not yet published at the time of his death, but were kept by him in a continual state of revision. For the reader ignorant of the kind of poet Lorca mainly was, they are important only as marking the extreme of his imaginative ingenuity, his willed and deliberate surrealism.

Lloraba el niño del velero, y se quebraban los corazones
Augustiados por el testigo y la vigilia de todas las cosas
Y porque todavía en el suelo celeste de negras huellas
Quitaban nombres oscuras salivas y radios de níquel . . .

Such lines, taken at random, and many more like them, are of importance only as they record the poet's violent hatred and disgust of the "Senegal of machinery" which he found in America.

What kind of a poet was Lorca? The question is important, since—so far as I can see—the third translator, Mr. Gilbert Neiman, a name unfamiliar to me, seems as fully qualified in every respect to translate him as are Spender and Humphries.

One can only say that Lorca was a poet possessing strongly the quality that now seems definitely passing out of poetry—the tragic folk-element. The element of the folk-troubadour was in him from the beginning and remained to the end. It was covered up, from time to time, by twentieth century sophistications of the surrealist sort, but it persisted. Humphries admits as much by tacitly translating, at the end, some of the finest of the early gypsy ballads—marvelous variations on forgotten folk-songs in their original, and worth far more as poems than the rages and disgusts of the earlier part of this volume. It is mainly as a sublimation of folk-singing that Lorca matters: and this is what neither Spender nor Humphries seem to think about.

The parallel to Lorca, in another country, is the work in Ireland of John Millington Synge. Both possessed elements that were not specifically European (Lorca himself was a gypsy, and Synge at least looked and acted like one) and which were peculiarly resistant to the inroads of modern industrialism. Both aimed finally at tragedy—peasant tragedy, folk-myth, seen through the eyes of those who can deliberately turn their backs on modern civilization. Lorca was the more lyrical, the less balanced, the more unaccountable, and—in his best moments—the greater of the two. Few poems in any language have such sheer brilliance wedded to amazing music as the entry of the moon into Act III of *Bodas de Sangre*:

Cisne redondo en el río,
Ojo de las catedrales,
Alba fingida en las hojas,
Soy; no podían escarpase!

To translate this, as Spender does,

I am the round swan in the river,
eye of the cathedrals,

dissembled dawn on the leaves:
they'll not be able to escape . . .

is merely fooling. Mr. Neiman, at least understands that something more is required, and makes an effort:

A swan rounded in the river,
Lone eye of the cathedrals,
A dawn dissembled on the leaves
I am, they cannot escape me!

So if anyone wants to understand what kind of a poet Lorca was, he had better read through this tragedy in its entirety, first of all. Then, and then only, one can understand why Lorca's loss at the age of thirty-seven was so great a one to Spanish literature. As for his political views, they are not really important. The fact remains that he was a poet, of a kind the world is not likely to see ever again.

John Gould Fletcher

NEWS NOTES

THIS issue of war poems recalls an earlier war issue of POETRY, published in November 1914, which included a number of contributions by writers who have since become famous. Among the contents were poems by Carl Sandburg, Richard Aldington, Wallace Stevens (his first magazine appearance), Maxwell Bodenheim, Joseph Campbell, and a piece in polyphonic prose, *The Bombardment*, by Amy Lowell. In an editorial on *Poetry and War* Alice Corbin Henderson wrote:

"Varying degrees of right and wrong, included in a greater wrong, can count for little with disillusioned minds. War has actually lost its illusion and its glamour. Some shreds of illusion may cling to the individual experience, the elemental sense of tragedy may lift the unforgivable facts to the height of emotional eloquence, but of what worth is this eloquence beside the collective naked waste?

"The American feeling about the war is a genuine revolt against war, and we have believed that POETRY might help to serve the cause of peace by encouraging the expression of this spirit of protest."

We can say the same thing today, with equal sincerity if not with equal hope.

For help in collecting material for the present issue, the editor wishes to thank the League of American Writers and its poetry committee under

the chairmanship of S. Funaroff. It is due to their efforts that we have the pleasure of including poems by Ruth Lechlitrer, David Wolff, Millen Brand, and A. F. Bergman.

A varied and interesting symposium on the present state of poetry is provided by *The Saturday Review of Literature* for August 10th. This issue is a special Poetry Number edited by William Rose Benét. In his leading article Benét suggests that "words like Liberty and Democracy are no good till the poets can tell you what they mean and set them into action before you. And they can do that, because those are words all poets have always lived by. They have never lived by intolerance or *Anschluss* or 'the right to brutality' or geopolitics or Might is Right or the imperialistic pursuit of power. They have always hated such things with their whole soul and their whole strength." There are some good articles by Mark Van Doren, Louis Untermeyer, Selden Rodman, and C. P. Lee, together with poems by Robinson Jeffers, Max Lerner, Leonard Bacon, Joseph Auslander, and others.

During the summer, choral works by two poets, Katherine Garrison Chapin and Genevieve Taggard, were given their first performance at the Lewisohn Stadium in New York by the Philharmonic Orchestra and top-ranking American choruses. *This Is Our Time*, a secular cantata, with words by Genevieve Taggard and music by William Shuman, was performed on July 4th by the orchestra and the People's Philharmonic Choral Society—a chorus of two hundred voices. The cantata will be given again this fall at Carnegie Hall. Miss Chapin's poem, *And They Lynched Him on a Tree*, was set to music by William Grant Still and presented June 25th by the Philharmonic with the Schola Cantorum and the Wen Talburt Choruses.

Still another of POETRY's contributors, Emma Gray Trigg, is the author of a new operetta, *Greenbrier*, with music by Elizabeth Bull Maury, which had its première at White Sulphur Springs, W. Va., on August 17th.

The second annual contest in the reading of poetry by high school students, sponsored by the English Club of the University of Newark in the schools of Northern New Jersey, brought out a great number of contestants this year. The aim of the contest is to develop an interest in intelligent reading of good verse, the standard dramatic and elocutionary pieces being avoided in the selection of poems. Henry Parker of Plainfield High School, who read Whitman's *Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night*, was the winner in the finals. The judges were Marianne Moore, Thomas C. Pollock, Eda Lou Walton, Henry W. Wells, Arthur L. Woehl, and Austin M. Works.

It would be difficult to imagine a better pair of poets for an impossible interview than W. H. Auden and Edgar A. Guest. The New York World's Fair, however, which has accomplished so many difficult things, has found the common ground on which these two may stand. As "dis-

tinguished foreign-born men of letters," their names have been emblazoned on the Wall of Honor in the American Common Building at the Fair. (Guest, like Auden, was born in England) The honor roll includes naturalized Americans and also Negroes and American Indians who have "added importantly to their country's greatness" in the fields of Art, Science, Business, Pioneering, Education, etc. Other poets included are James Weldon Johnson, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Francis Grierson.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and is a student at the University of Michigan, where he recently received one of the major Hopwood awards for poetry. He appeared here for the first time in September 1939, and was awarded the Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize for that year.

DAVID WOLFF, of New York, has contributed to POETRY, *The New Republic*, *New Letters in America*, etc., and has written poems for documentary films.

RUTH LECHLITNER, of Cold Spring, N. Y., has appeared often here and in other magazines. She is the author of a book of poems, *Tomorrow's Phoenix*.

JULIAN SYMONS, of London, was editor of the poetry magazine *Twentieth Century Verse* (now suspended) and is the author of a book of poems, *Confusions About X*.

MARSHALL SCHACHT has been a contributor since 1929. He is a social service worker and lives in New York.

MARION STROBEL, of Chicago, was formerly on the staff of POETRY and is the author of two books of poems, *Once in a Blue Moon* and *Lost City*.

MILLEN BRAND, of Barto, Pa., contributes stories and poems to magazines. He is the author of a well-known novel, *The Outward Room*.

EDWIN MUIR is a well-known English poet and critic.

JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN, of Baltimore, is the author of a recent book of poems, *Let Each Man Remember*.

The following poets appear here for the first time:

LAWRENCE LEE, of Charlottesville, Va., is the author of several books of poetry and is editor of *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. A new book of his poems, *The Tomb of Thomas Jefferson*, has just been published by Scribner's.

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS was born in Muskegon, Mich., in 1913, attended De Paul and Notre Dame, and has been teaching English for the past year at the latter university. He is at present working for his doc-

torate at the University of Chicago, where he was recently co-winner of the John Billings Fiske Prize for poetry.

R. N. CURREY is a young English poet. His first book, *Tiresias and Other Verses*, will be published this year by the Oxford University Press.

ALEXANDER F. BERGMAN, a New York writer, has been in ill health for several years. He is a patient at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx.

This month's prose contributors have all appeared previously:

KENNETH FEARING, of New York, is the author of several books of poems, the most recent being *Dead Reckoning*. DAVID DAICHES is a young British poet and critic now teaching at the University of Chicago. F. C. WEISKOPF, a well-known Czech writer now resident in New York, was formerly editor of two newspapers in the Sudeten territory. ROBERTA TEALE SWARTZ, of Gambier, O., is the author of two books of poems, *Lilliput* and *Lord Juggler*. JOHN GOULD FLETCHER has been a contributor for 28 years. His *Selected Poems* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1939. THOMAS HOWELLS, formerly of Chicago, is now teaching at Whitman College, Walla Walla, Wash. FRAJAM TAYLOR is a young New York writer.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ORIGINAL VERSE:

Wait for These Things, by George Abbe. Henry Holt & Co.

In What Hour, by Kenneth Rexroth. Macmillan Co.

The Tomb of Thomas Jefferson, by Lawrence Lee. Charles Scribner's Sons.

The Gap of Brightness, by F. R. Higgins. Macmillan Co.

Pattern of a Day, by Robert Hillyer. Alfred A. Knopf.

Maine Tides, by Wilbert Snow.. Henry Holt & Co.

Narration With a Red Piano, by J. Calder Joseph. The Little Man Press, Cincinnati.

Forty Poems, by Edith Heilman. Dorrance & Co.

In the Wind's Teeth, by Flexmore Hudson. F. W. Preece & Sons. Adelaide, Australia.

At Least It Rhymes, by Clara King Voorhees. Priv. ptd., Berkeley, Cal.

The Alleghenians, by Frederic Brush. Blackshaw Press, New York City.

Fragments, by Ada Cora Shattinger. Priv. ptd., Los Altos, Cal.

Songs of a Cross-bearer, by Ambrose Elihu Nakao. Slok-Shok-Do, Ubagaya Kamakura, Japan.

ANTHOLOGY AND PROSE:

The Oxford Book of Christian Verse, edited by Lord David Cecil. Oxford Univ. Press.

Arthurian Romance and Modern Poetry and Music, by William A. Nitze. University of Chicago Press.

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**EXCERPT FROM A FEATURE ARTICLE BY JAMES GRAY
IN HIS COLUMN IN THE ST. PAUL DISPATCH,
FEBRUARY 8, 1940**

CONSIDER, for a moment, how infinitely poorer American literature might very well have been if POETRY had not existed. In its pages appeared first the work of Vachel Lindsay. Circumstance beat Lindsay to his knees in the end and he made his exit from life a suicide, maddened by the need of a few dollars. If it had not been for POETRY that moment of despair might have come before Lindsay ever got started. POETRY gave him his voice and his audience. It wooed him on to the exercise of his extraordinary gift.

POETRY was damned mercilessly by the editor of *The Dial* for printing an "effusion" which was called an "impudent affront to the poetry-loving public." That effusion was Sandburg's "Chicago." Suppose POETRY had not printed it. Sandburg might have gone on indefinitely writing movie reviews for the *Chicago Daily News* or he might have taken to tramping the earth again, saying to hell with literature.

There were great epic rows over the work of Ezra Pound and D. H. Lawrence and John Gould Fletcher. But POETRY kept on printing them resolutely until the world had begun to accept them as poets of distinction and importance.

In quieter moments, POETRY persuaded Rabindranath Tagore to translate his work for the first time into English. The talents over which people quarreled and those which they accepted readily all were welcome if only they were genuine talents. . . . And now POETRY needs help. It needs to speak to everyone who has valued its service during the past 30 years and who would like to have an opportunity to say: "Carry on!" There is of course only one way of offering that encouragement. It is to send in a subscription to the headquarters of the magazine at 232 East Erie Street, Chicago. . . . We live in a moment when a sane society should be particularly jealous of the preservation of its culture. POETRY has had a very great share in maturing America's taste. It cannot now be spared.
